

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

"THE RISE OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM IN WESTPHALIA 1920-1933".

by

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the origin and development of National Socialism in a predominantly industrialised province containing both Catholics and Protestants in roughly equal numbers.

Following a description of the province of Westphalia, the initial emphasis is placed on providing the setting in which Nazism operated. Thus the revolution of 1918 and its political consequences are dealt with, as well as the political and economic situation of the nineteen-twenties. The strength of the left-wing parties and of the Centre Party in Westphalia is stressed.

The emphasis switches to the NSDAP. Its early history is outlined, especially its connection with diverse radical right-wing movements which helped to prepare the way for Nazism. The problems of the nascent NSDAP, its restriction to urban centres of the Ruhr, its limited impact due to the socio-religious composition of the population, and the weakness of the regional party organisation are examined. The fragmentation of the regional völkisch-National Socialist movement after the failure of the Hitler Putsch of 1923 is analysed.

The re-formation of the NSDAP and the Westphalian reaction to Munich developments provide the basis for an account of the construction, founded on the implementation of the Führerprinzip, of the regional organisation. Although support dwindled by 1927 as political and economic circumstances became more settled, the importance of the developments of the years 1926 to 1929 is emphasized since this is the period during which the Nazis perfected their organisation and propaganda techniques and extended their operations - especially, after 1928, into the rural areas. The build-up of the regional party allowed the Nazis to exploit the political and economic difficulties created by the economic crisis after 1929.

The increasing success of the Westphalian NSDAP, as reflected in the expansion of party membership and growing electoral support between 1930 and 1932 is noted. An analysis of the developments in the Gau administra-

tion, the emphasis on specialist organisations and their limited success, is followed by an examination of the NSDAP's failure to make any serious impression on the left-wing vote and the Catholic vote in the elections of 1932. A review of the history of the NSDAP in Westphalia concludes the study.

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Abbreviations

Parties and other Organisations

AG	Arbeitsgemeinschaft der nord und west-deutschen Gaue der NSDAP
APA	Agrarpolitischer Apparat
BNSDJ	Bund Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Juristen
CSVD	Christlich-sozialer Volksdienst
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei
DHV	Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband
DK	Deutsch-Konservative Partei
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei
DSP	Deutschsozialistische Partei
DVFB	Deutschvölkische Freiheitsbewegung
DVFP	Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei
DVO	Deutschvölkischer Offiziersbund
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei
DVSuTB	Deutschvölkischer Schutz und Trutz Bund
FVP	Fortschrittliche Volkspartei
GDAP	Grossdeutsche Arbeiterpartei
GVG	Grossdeutsche Volksgemeinschaft
HJ	Hitlerjugend
JdO	Jungdeutscher Orden
KAPD	Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
MSPD	Mehrheitssozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
NL	Nationalliberale Partei
NSBO	Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
NSDStB	Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund
NSFB	Nationalsozialistische Freiheitsbewegung
NSFP	Nationalsozialistische Freiheitspartei
NSS	Nationalsozialistischer Schülerbund
Orgesch	Organisation Escherich
RBA	Reichsbetriebszellenabteilung
RP	Reichspartei
SA	Sturmabteilung
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SS	Schutzstaffel
SVP	Sozialistische Vaterlandspartei
Ushla	Untersuchungs und Schlichtungsausschuss
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
WB	Westfalenbund
WTB	Westfälischer Treubund
VNKV	Verein nationaler Kampfverbände
V-S-B	Völkisch-Sozialer-Block

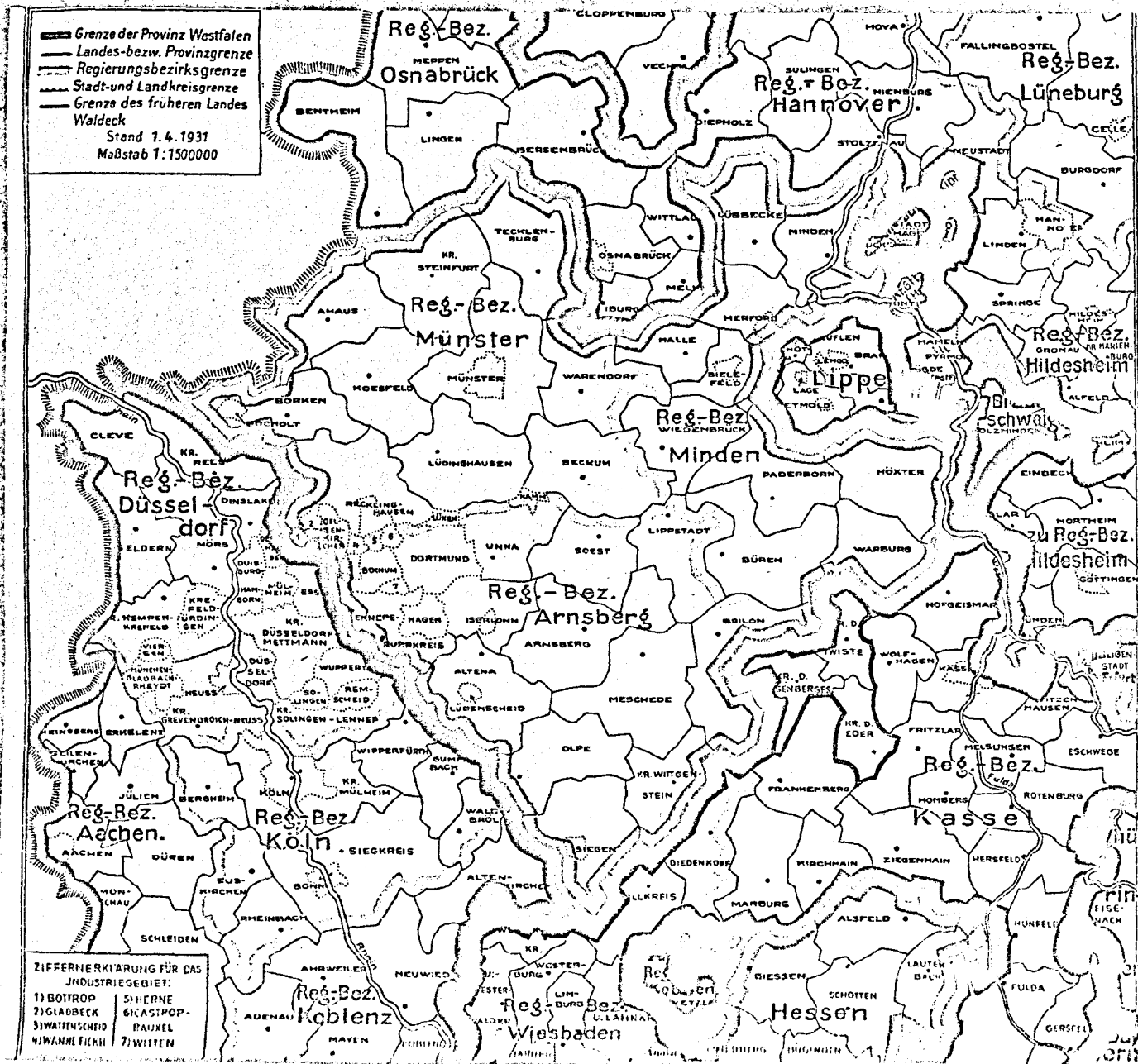
Archives

BAK	Bundesarchiv Koblenz
HA	Hauptarchiv der NSDAP, e.g. HA 3/86 - Hauptarchiv Reel 3, Folder 86
NA	National Archives, e.g. NA 7 / I / II44I - National Archives Serial 7, Roll I, Frame II44I
SAD	Staatsarchiv Detmold
SAM	Staatsarchiv Münster
WWA	Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv

Other

BL	Bezirksleitung; Bezirksleiter
GL	Gauleitung; Gauleiter
IHK	Industrie und Handelskammer
OG	Ortsgruppe
OGL	Ortsgruppenleitung; Ortsgruppenleiter
OSAF	Oberster SA-Führer
Pf	Pfennig
PL	Parteileitung
RM	Reichsmark
SABE	SA-Befehl
SAF	SA-Führer
<u>VB</u>	<u>Völkischer Beobachter</u>
<u>W-N</u>	<u>Westfalen-Nord</u>
W-S	Westfalen-Süd

The Regierungsbezirke and Kreise in the province of Westphalia



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INTRODUCTION

Regional and local studies on Nazism have produced a much more detailed knowledge of the history of the NSDAP in its Kampfzeit phase, and have thrown much light on the organisation of the party, its propaganda techniques, and the numerous factors influencing its growth. For some years Heberle's study on the NSDAP in Schleswig-Holstein was the sole example of the 'regional approach'.¹⁾ His study, however, deals primarily with the social and economic factors which favoured the rise of Nazism, and says little about the organisation of the movement. In the nineteen-sixties a number of works appeared on the Munich and Bavarian NSDAP, which cover the formative years of the Nazi movement up to the time of the putsch in 1923.²⁾ Other regional and local studies were also published at the time, which are useful in filling in a number of gaps in our knowledge. Some of these are collections of documents relating to the entire Weimar period.³⁾ Others deal with the history of the party for only brief timespans, but generally start in 1930 (by which time the Nazis had already established themselves) and say little about the political situation beforehand.⁴⁾ There are also a number of studies on the Gleichschaltung at local and regional levels, but these deal primarily with the political situation and have little to say on

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- 1) R. Heberle, From Democracy to Nazism, Baton Rouge, 1945; cf. his later work Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein, Stuttgart, 1963. A supplementary study of the region is provided by G. Stoltenberg, Politische Strömungen im schleswig-holsteinischen Landvolk 1918-1933, Düsseldorf, 1962.
 - 2) H.H. Hofmann, Der Hitlerputsch. Krisenjahre der deutschen Geschichte 1920-1924, Munich, 1961; G. Franz-Willing, Die Hitlerbewegung. Der Ursprung 1919-1922, Hamburg, 1962; W. Maser, Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP. Hitlers Weg bis 1924, Frankfurt, 1965.
 - 3) E.g. W. Jochmann, Nationalsozialismus und Revolution. Ursprung und Geschichte der NSDAP in Hamburg 1922-1933. Dokumente, Frankfurt, 1963.
 - 4) E.g. E-A. Roloff, Bürgerturn und Nationalsozialismus 1930-1933. Braunschweigs Weg ins Dritte Reich, Hanover, 1961; W.S. Allen, The Nazi Seizure of Power. The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-1935, London, 1966.

5)

general party development.

Recently several regional studies have appeared which analyse the formation and growth of the NSDAP in a comprehensive fashion. ⁶⁾ Two of these, by Noakes and Schön, concentrate on areas primarily agrarian in nature and having a predominantly Protestant population. Pridham's study deals with the expansion of the NSDAP in Bavaria after its re-formation in 1925. Here again the economic structure is basically agrarian, but in this case the region has a predominantly Catholic population. Although all three regions, especially Schön's area, contain pockets of industrialism, the rural, small town vote determined the relative strengths of the political parties. Finally, a recent work by Levine examines the NSDAP in the Free City of Danzig - an interesting study of an area in which unique factors were at play. ⁷⁾

The above studies are of great importance because they indicate different historical, socio-religious conditions in which the NSDAP operated. German history provides much scope for the 'regional study' because of Germany's regional diversity. There is still scope for further studies. For example, there are, as yet, no examinations of Berlin, a stronghold of left-wing parties during the Weimar period, or Württemberg, with its strong liberal tradition. The Catholic Rhineland, too, has been barely touched upon. ⁸⁾

The present study deals with the rise of Nazism in Westphalia. It is not merely an attempt to cover unworked territory. It is a study which examines Nazism as it operated in a predominantly industrial, urban

5) E.g. H. Timpke (ed.), Dokumente zur Gleichschaltung des Landes Hamburg, Frankfurt, 1964; H. Rehberger, Die Gleichschaltung des Landes Baden, 1932/33, Heidelberg, 1966.

6) J. Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921-1933, O.U.P., 1971; E. Schön, Die Entstehung des Nationalsozialismus in Hessen, Meisenheim am Glan, 1972; G. Pridham, Hitler's Rise to Power. The Nazi Movement in Bavaria 1923-1933, London, 1973.

7) H.S. Levine, Hitler's Free City. A History of the Nazi Party in Danzig 1925-1939, London, 1973.

8) G. Plum, Gesellschaftsstruktur und politisches Bewusstsein in einer katholischen Region 1928-1933. Untersuchungen am Beispiel des Regierungsbezirks Aachen, Stuttgart, 1972.

region. Despite the agricultural hinterland of central and eastern Westphalia, the politics of the province was determined by the urban, industrial voter. It is also a region in which the Catholic and Protestant religions were of equal strength. The study thus allows an analysis of the impact of National Socialism on an area the regional character and diverse political loyalties of which provided the party with many problems. It is a region in which the NSDAP failed to make the progress it recorded elsewhere. Westphalia provided the Nazis with some of their worst electoral results.

Although the major part of this study deals with the NSDAP, the initial chapters deal with the revolution of 1918 and the major political and economic developments of the decade 1918-1928. These chapters are designed to provide an understanding of the environment in which the NSDAP operated.

Chapter 1. THE PROVINCE OF WESTPHALIA.

The province of Westphalia was formed in 1815 through the amalgamation of a variety of territories acquired by Prussia following the deliberations at the Congress of Vienna.¹⁾ The Hohenzollern presence in the Westphalian region can be traced back to 1614 and the Treaty of Xanten at which the Brandenburg-Prussian state acquired Mark and Ravensberg. In the course of the next two centuries piecemeal acquisitions by the Hohenzollern dynasty punctuated the history of the region. At the Peace of Westphalia the lands of the Archbishopric of Minden fell to Brandenburg-Prussia. The eighteenth century brought small gains in the shape of Lingen in 1702 and Tecklenburg in 1707. The most dramatic changes occurred during, and immediately after, the Napoleonic era. Under the Reichsdeputationshauptschluss of 1803 Prussia secured the eastern half of the Archbishopric of Münster and the whole of the Archbishopric of Paderborn, along with Herford and Huckarde, all as compensation for Prussian losses to the French west of the Rhine. These gains, along with the other Westphalian territories of the Hohenzollerns, were lost following the reduction of Prussia under the provisions of the Peace of Tilsit in 1807. From 1807 onwards the bulk of the Westphalian region formed the core of a French satellite kingdom, the "Kingdom of Westphalia", under the control of Jérôme Bonaparte. The collapse of French hegemony in 'Germany' saw a revival of Prussian power in the region. As one of the participants in the defeat of France the Prussian state regained not only its former territories in Westphalia, but acquired further lands in the area. In 1815 the western section of the Archbishopric of Münster fell to Prussia, along with a number of smaller territories, those of Siegen, Wittgenstein, Limburg, Dortmund, Recklinghausen, Gemen, Anholt, Steinfurt, Rheda, Reckenberg, Rietberg and Korvey. In 1816 the Dukedom of Westphalia

1) For the following see G. Engel, Politische Geschichte Westfalens, Cologne, 1968, pp.175 ff..

was added. These territories were fused with the gains of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to form one of the ten provinces of Prussia: Westphalia. Finally, in 1850 the small enclave of Lippstadt was absorbed into the province.

The province provided the Prussian authorities with the very real problems of territorial particularism and religious division. The former was relatively successfully overcome through the construction of an efficient and honest civil administration. A deep cleavage remained, however, on the religious side. In the late nineteenth century the distrust and antagonism between the Catholic population and their Protestant ruler was revived in the so-called 'Kulturkampf', which was especially hard-fought in the province.²⁾ The awakening of the political consciousness of the Catholic population engendered by the Church-State conflict was reflected in the strong support mobilised by the Catholic Centre Party during the Second Reich, a feature of Westphalian politics which was also present in the Weimar period.

Tremendous changes occurred in Westphalia as a result of the economic developments which affected large parts of the province in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁾ In the first half of the nineteenth century the province was predominantly agrarian in character.⁴⁾ The only outcrops of industrial activity were the iron-finishing industries in the Sauerland concentrated in the Ennepe, Volme and Lenne valleys, and the iron-ore mining and smelting industry in the Siegerland. The Ruhr valley itself contained a few coal mines servicing the needs of the metal industries to the south. The economic structure of the region was altered by the economic growth which increasingly affected the province from around 1840, stimulated by the administrative rationalisation carried through by the Prussian authorities, the expansion of the internal market with the construction of the Zollverein.

2) Engel, op. cit., pp.262-265.

3) On the economic development during this period see N.J.G. Pounds, The Ruhr. A Study in Historical and Economic Geography, New York, 1968.

4) G. Droege, Deutsche Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, Frankfurt, 1972, p. 169.

the improvement in communications, especially the construction of railways in the 1840's and 1850's, and the discovery of the enormous coal deposits in the Ruhr and Lippe valleys. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards coal-mining was of increasing importance, with mines scattered thickly along both banks of the Ruhr from Kettwig up to Witten, and in a broad belt from Witten eastwards as far as Unna. 5) The presence of cheap power attracted the smelting industry, the combination of coal and iron transforming the face of the Ruhr in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Coal-mining expanded dramatically, both in terms of output and in the number of people employed in the industry. 6) On the foundation of coal rested an extensive iron and steel industry. By 1900 factory industry dominated the entire Ruhr region, which had by then become the economic powerhouse of the Second Reich. 7) Half of the complex lay within the boundaries of the province of Westphalia.

The extensive industrialisation had a profound impact on the province. It was accompanied by a process of urbanisation which affected especially the "inner" belt of the Ruhr region. By the twentieth century the labour needed to fuel and sustain the economic expansion had produced a series of urban sprawls. Cities had emerged out of small towns within the space of a few generations. 8) The vast labour requirements were met by the migration of workers into the Ruhr from the highlands on both banks of the Rhine, from

5) Pounds, op. cit., p.65.

6) Statistics of the Oberbergamt of Dortmund show the tremendous expansion:

	Tonnage mined	Number employed
1850	1,665,662	12,741
1900	59,618,900	226,902
1913	110,765,495	397,339

From D. Baedeker, (ed.), Jahrbuch des Oberbergamtes Dortmund, Essen, 1923, p.804.

7) Pounds, op. cit., pp. 97 ff..

8) E.g. Bochum's population grew from 2,000 in 1800 to 15,000 by 1867; 53,842 by 1895; 136,931 by 1910. Dortmund grew even faster: 1811 - 4,800; 1880 - 66,500; 1910 - 260,000.

On the problems produced by rapid urbanisation in the Ruhr see H.G. Steinberg 'Zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des Ruhrgebiets' in W. Fürst (ed.) Politik und Landschaft, Cologne, 1969, pp.179-215.

Saxony, Silesia, East Prussia, Poland and the lands of the Austrian Empire. The migration introduced a new statistic into Westphalian demography, a sizeable Polish minority. ⁹⁾

The province of Westphalia survived the collapse of the "old" kingdom of Prussia in 1918. The administrative pattern established in the course of the nineteenth century also survived, though the introduction of a new Prussian constitution in November 1920 democratised the communal and provincial electoral system by sweeping away the old three-class franchise. The province continued to be controlled by an Oberpräsidium situated in Münster. ¹⁰⁾ Under it were the three Regierungsbezirke into which Westphalia was divided: those of Arnsberg, Minden and Münster. Each Regierungsbezirk was in turn divided into urban and rural counties.

The 1925 census recorded a population of 4,783,858 in the province. This was unequally distributed among the three Regierungsbezirke, with Arnsberg containing 2,514,167, Münster 1,463,090, and Minden 806,601. ¹¹⁾ The distribution of the population varied considerably. The degree of urbanisation, and hence the highest population density, was at its greatest in the Ruhr, which was the most densely populated part of Germany. ¹²⁾ In the counties of Bochum and Dortmund the average population density stood at 727 people per square kilometre. The next most populous zones were those of the counties of Hattingen and Hörde, where the average was 383. The industrial parts of the Bielefeld region were also heavily populated. The average for the counties of Bielefeld and Herford was 269 persons per square kilometre. The

- 9) The numbers involved are difficult to determine. According to figures compiled by the Oberpräsidium of Westphalia there were 162,578 Poles in the province in 1902, a number which rose to 284,718 by 1908. These figures have to be treated with reservation. On the whole question of the Polish presence in the province see 'Die Polen im Ruhrgebiet' in H-U. Wehler, Krisenherde des Kaiserreichs 1871-1918, Göttingen, 1970, pp.219 ff..
- 10) During the Weimar period the post of Oberpräsident was held by Bernhard Würmeling from 1918 to 1922, and Johannes Gronowski from 1922 to 1933. The former proved unequal to the tasks facing the province in the post-war period, and was assisted by Carl Severing from April 1919. Gronowski lost his post at the time of the Nazi 'Gleichschaltung' in 1933.
- 11) S. Reekers/J. Schulz, Die Bevölkerung in den Gemeinden Westfalens 1818-1950, Dortmund, 1952, pp.2-6.
- 12) For the following see A. Milatz, Wähler und Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik, Bonn, 1965, pp.66 ff..

predominantly agrarian parts of Westphalia had a much lower density. In the Münsterland the average lay between 60 and 70. County Wittgenstein was the least populous part. It was one of the poorest agrarian counties not only of Westphalia, but of Prussia as a whole.

The economic structure of Westphalia is heterogeneous. The province can be divided into several zones characterised by distinct industrial activity. 13) Of primary importance was the heavy industry zone of the Ruhr, which dominates the Gelsenkirchen-Recklinghausen-Dortmund-Bochum region, with off-shoots towards Hagen to the south and Hamm to the east. The Westphalian sector of the Ruhr was especially important for coal production. In 1928 it produced 53 per cent of the coal and 64.5 per cent of the coke output of Germany. Coal fuelled the iron and steel industry, which in turn fed materials to innumerable engineering and metal-using firms manufacturing a great variety of products. Important also was the chemical industry, especially in Witten, Castrop-Rauxel, Bochum-Gerthe, Kamen and Dortmund. Dortmund was also noted for its brewing industry, boasting the third largest concentration of brewing concerns in Germany next to Berlin and Munich. The industrial towns of the Ruhr were each dominated by one or two very large concerns, employing the majority of the local labour force. In general the large concerns were surrounded by a swarm of smaller works, overshadowed by the giants, upon which they depended in varying degrees for the supply of materials. 14)

The Ruhr concerns dominated not only the economic activity of the "inner" Ruhr, but also had strong connections with the industrial complexes of the Sauerland and the Siegerland. The metallurgical industries of the Sauerland were the heirs of the long tradition of iron-working which had grown up in the area during the Middle Ages. By the twentieth century the survival of

13) On the nature of the Westphalian economy in the early twentieth century see B. Kuske's article 'Der Wirtschaftsraum' in H. Aubin/O. Bühler/B. Kuske/A. Schulte, Der Raum Westfalen, Berlin, 1931, pp.75 ff..

14) Pounds, op. cit., p.118.

the small-scale unit of production, which characterised such centres as Iserlohn, Altena, Werdohl and Lüdenscheid, depended on the skill of the local labour and the capital invested in local plant and equipment. These factors justified the transport of iron and coal from the Ruhr region for fabrication in the Sauerland. ¹⁵⁾ Of importance too, as an employer of labour, were the many chalk pits of the Lenne and Hönne valleys, which supplied the bulk of the 2M. tons annually required for re-lining the smelting-ovens of the Ruhr. ¹⁶⁾ Closely tied to Ruhr industry was the iron-ore mining zone of the Siegerland. The bulk of the ore mined (circa 2m. tons per annum) went to the Ruhr, primarily to the Dortmund region. ¹⁷⁾ The native metal-processing industry was dependent, as in the Sauerland region, on traditional skill and high quality production.

Beyond the predominantly coal-mining and metal-working areas, Westphalia contained three further "industrial zones" in the early twentieth century: the Ibbenbüren region, the textile industry of the Münsterland, and the mixed-industry of the Minden-Ravensberg region. ¹⁸⁾ The Ibbenbüren region, situated in the county of Tecklenburg, was based on a geological freak, an outcrop of coal, an offshoot of the Ruhr coalfield. The output per annum was only 600,000 tons in the 1920's and 1930's, but this provided sufficient power for a small metal-working industry in the Ibbenbüren-Osnabrück region. Radically different in character was the textile industry situated in the western counties of the Münsterland along the Dutch border. This was the chief employer of labour in the counties of Steinfurt, Ahaus, Borken and Coesfeld. The area was the major centre of the German woollen and linen industry. ¹⁹⁾ The development of the industry was closely tied to the agrarian nature of the counties, and the tradition of textile manufacture as a cottage industry. Textile manufacturing

15) Pounds, op. cit., p.119.

16) Kuske, op. cit., p.82.

17) Ibid., pp.92 ff..

18) Ibid., pp.96 ff..

19) Westphalia had 54,000 units of production, as against the 24,000 of the Rhineland and 17,000 of Saxony.

also figured in the "mixed" industrial zone represented by the Minden-Ravensberg area, especially in the Bielefeld region. The presence of the textile industry in this area had given rise to the manufacture of textile machinery, and this in turn had produced a small-scale metal working industry. Of importance in the area was also the tobacco industry, especially cigar-making. By the twentieth century the latter was primarily a rural industry, heir to the old linen industry of the nineteenth century, which had not been able to compete with mechanised production. Hence the switch to cigar-making, which dominated especially the county of Herford where half of the total labour force was engaged in the industry. It was also a major employer in the counties of Lübbecke and Minden. The Minden-Ravensberg region was also a centre of a varied consumer industry, the brewing and dairy industries having special significance.

Despite the predominance of industry, Westphalia also contained a broad agricultural belt which stretched eastward from the county of Münster to the county of Höxter, with a southern off-shoot which included the counties of Büren, Brilon, Meschede and Wittgenstein. Arable and dairy farming remained an important aspect of the economy, stimulated by the close proximity of the urban centres of the Ruhr. The units of production were small and medium sized, with mixed agriculture the norm. 20) In the southern counties of Brilon and Wittgenstein the main pursuit was forestry rather than agriculture. 21) Within the predominantly agrarian counties there were numerous industrial concerns. These were widely dispersed, generally small-scaled, involving light-industry such as glass-making, pottery, the manufacture of leather goods, saw-mills, chalk-pits, cement works and so on.

Given the economic structure, the working population was chiefly engaged

-
- 20) Typical is the breakdown of the size of farms in the county of Wiedenbrück:
- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| to 5 ha. | 2,569 units | 61 per cent |
| 5 to 20 ha. | 1,799 units | 30.7 per cent |
| 20 to 100 ha. | 362 units | 7.9 per cent |
| over 100 ha. | 16 units | 0.4 per cent |

Figures for 1933, from W. Herbort/W. Lenz/I. Heiland/G. Willner, Der Landkreis Wiedenbrück, Cologne, 1969, p.119.

- 21) Some 55 per cent of the Sauerland was woodland and forest, double the Reich average.

in industry. Within Germany as a whole, Westphalia had the highest percentage of people employed in the industrial sector. ²²⁾ The available statistics (for 1928) break down as follows:

	Agriculture & Forestry	Industry	Business & Trade
Reg. Bez. Münster	23.7%	52.2%	12.3%
Minden	34.4%	44.0%	11.8%
Arnsberg	11.5%	60.7%	16.3%
Westphalia	19.8%	54.8%	14.2%
Reich	30.5%	41.4%	16.5%

²³⁾

The statistics relating to industrial employment hide interesting and significant features. One aspect they do not reflect is the fact that certain areas of Westphalia were dominated almost entirely by a single branch of industrial activity. Thus in the towns of Gelsenkirchen (with a population of 208,000) and Osterfeld, 85 per cent of the working population were engaged in coal-mining. In the counties of Recklinghausen, Hamm and Lüdninghausen the percentage employed in coal-mining was also very high, running at 76 per cent, 66 per cent and 62.5 per cent respectively. ²⁴⁾ In the textile centres a slightly less unbalanced employment situation prevailed. The percentage of those employed in the textile industry was 62.4 per cent in county Steinfurt, 58.4 per cent in county Ahaus, and 51 per cent in county Borken. ²⁵⁾ A similar situation existed in the many towns of the Ruhr and Sauerland dependent on the metallurgical industry. The overall pattern of employment was made very unfavourable by the dependence of many towns and whole regions on one industrial activity, a feature much regretted by the authorities. A report by the Landesarbeitsamt of Westphalia-Lippe noted the unfavourable structure of the industrial pattern in which there were only 'a few, but large branches of production, in which the large industrial unit predominates'. It was pointed out that for Westphalia as a whole some 85 per cent of those employed depended on the coal, iron and textile industries. A further handicap noted in the report

22) Milatz, op. cit., p.84.

23) F.J. Gieselmann/B. Ordemann/E. Mangels, Der Raum Westfalen: Untersuchungen über Wirtschaft, Verkehr und Arbeitsmarkt, Berlin, 1932, p.14.

24) Kuske, op. cit., p.77.

25) Ibid., p.96.

was the poor geographic distribution of industry, the heavy concentration in western Westphalia containing 'many communities almost solely dependent on the iron and steel industry'. 26) The problem this created is obvious. In times of recession the situation of the population was catastrophic since there was little alternative employment. Another significant feature was the low number employed in the trade handicrafts in the Ruhr towns compared with those in other parts of the province. 27) The explanation for this feature must be sought in the nature of the economic development of the Ruhr. The rapid population expansion in the old Ruhr towns in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries swamped the local handicrafts which were unable to adjust to, and compete with, modern factory production methods. The 'new' Ruhr towns, on the other hand, mushroomed in basically rural settings. Capitalist modes of production existed from the very start, and handicrafts failed to develop. A further explanation for the under-representation of artisans in the Ruhr may be the "proletarian" nature of the population and their low requirement for craft services. 28)

Despite the preponderance of industry, parts of Westphalia were very agrarian, and agriculture continued to play an important role as an employer, especially in the Regierungsbezirke of Münster and Minden. In the counties of Warendorf, Halle, Lübbecke and Büren, between 50 and 60 per cent of the population depended on agriculture for their livelihood. In a number of counties industry and agriculture were of equal importance, namely in Tecklenburg, Münster, Borken, Paderborn, Warburg and Höxter. 29) In the case of the last county agriculture was marginally the "chief employer" with 43 per cent. 30) Even in the Regierungsbezirk of Arnsberg agriculture continued to be of significance in the eastern counties of Brilon and Wittgenstein, where agriculture and forestry employed as many people as did industry. 31) In the adjoining

26) "Bericht des Arbeitsamtes Westfalen und Lippe", n.d. (it covers the period 1 April 1926 to 31 March 1927): WWA K2/181.

27) Kuske, op. cit., p.88.

28) Kuske, op. cit., p.89.

29) Aubin, et. al., op. cit., Appendix, 19.

30) W. Lescher/P. Schubert, Heimatchronik des Kreises Höxter, Cologne, 1966, p.231

31) Aubin, et. al., op. cit., Appendix, 19.

county Siegen, with its numerous mining and industrial concerns, some 23.7 per cent of the gainfully employed depended on agriculture and forestry for their livelihood. ³²⁾ The economic structure of such agrarian counties as Büren, Warendorf, Lübbecke, Halle, Brilon and so on, was markedly different from those of the industrialised counties of the Ruhr. Economic and social patterns were a world apart despite the geographic proximity. The political behaviour of the population was to reflect the differences.

Also important in determining political behaviour was the religious composition of the population. During the Weimar period Catholicism and Protestantism were roughly equal in strength in the province. ³³⁾ Neither had an absolute majority, though the former (49.8 per cent) was fractionally ahead of the latter (47.3 per cent). Of the three Regierungsbezirke, Münster was predominantly Catholic (74.6 per cent), while Arnsberg had a very small (52.3 per cent) and Minden a much larger Protestant majority (65.8 per cent). The distribution of the two faiths within the province was strongly conditioned by the history of the various elements which were joined together to form the province in 1815-1816. The counties situated in the lands formerly belonging to the Archbishoprics of Münster and Paderborn, and the old Dukedom of Westphalia (tied to the Archbishopric of Cologne) were strongly Catholic, and retained their Catholicism in the post-1815 period. In the nineteen-twenties two-thirds of the Westphalian Catholics lived in these areas. Several counties were virtually 100 per cent Catholic, such as Münster (50,000 Catholics to 1,000 Protestants), Büren (40,000 to 1,000), Warendorf (35,000 to 1,000), Borken (48,000 to 2,000), Brilon (45,000 to 2,000), and Meschede (44,000 to 2,000). Within the compact Catholic regions there were a few Protestant enclaves, "historical oddities" such as the town of Gronau (independent for centuries) in the predominantly Catholic county of Ahaus (55,000 to 9,000) with its small Protestant majority of 53.2 per cent. Gütersloh, with a similar history of

³²⁾ Gieselmann, et. al., op. cit., p.106.

³³⁾ For the following see Milatz, op. cit., pp.74-75. Further Aubin, et. al., op. cit., Appendix, 47.

civic independence, had an even larger Protestant majority of 77 per cent, though the county to which it belonged, Wiedenbrück, had a Catholic majority of 89.4 per cent.

In the "old" Prussian territories of Mark, Ravensberg and Minden, the Protestant faith predominated. The towns and counties in which the Protestants had a majority do not, however, present a geographically compact region on the Catholic lines. In the Regierungsbezirk of Münster there was only one county in which the Protestants had a majority, namely Tecklenburg (38,000 Protestants to 30,000 Catholics). Solidly Protestant were the northern counties of the Regierungsbezirk of Minden: Bielefeld (79,000 to 4,000), Halle (32,000 to 1,000), Herford (102,000 to 2,000) and Minden (116,000 to 5,000). In the county of Lübbecke (population of 55,000) there were virtually no Catholics, giving it a Protestant majority of 98.7 per cent. Almost 'purely' Protestant were the former independent territory of Wittgenstein (26,000 to 1,000), and the old Nassau territory of Siegen (73,000 to 15,000).

More solidly Protestant in the Regierungsbezirk of Arnsberg were the counties comprising Mark and the former Imperial free city of Dortmund. In this region, as is true of the Ruhr area in general, the religious composition of the counties was less static, and strongly influenced by the industrialisation of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The influx of large numbers of workers from outside Westphalia modified the picture.³⁴⁾ In part, as in the towns of Bochum (105,000 to 98,000), Gelsenkirchen (101,000 to 97,000), Herne (33,000 to 32,000), and Hörde (17,000 to 16,000), the Protestant majorities of the nineteenth century were changed from absolute to relative ones by the twentieth century. In several counties the Protestant percentage no longer exceeded 60 per cent, and within these there were large Catholic communities. The situation produced variable confessional patterns. Thus the urban county of Hörde, with its parity between the two faiths, was markedly different in

34) On the local level, the policies pursued by industrial tycoons had some significance. Thus the Lutherans Kirdorf and Grillo (Gelsenkirchen) tended to take their workers from East Prussia; the Catholic Klöckner (Hagen) more often engaged Catholics from West Prussia and Poland. See Pounds, op. cit., p.130.

this respect from the rural county, in which the Protestants were in an absolute majority (79,000 to 34,000). The urban county of Hamm had a Catholic majority (29,000 to 20,000) whereas the administrative area to which it belonged, the county of Unna, had a Protestant majority (81,000 to 41,000). Conversely, in the adjacent county Soest, the town of Soest had a Protestant majority, whereas the county was predominantly Catholic (40,000 to 27,000). It was only in the southern counties of Mark that the Protestant faith retained its old dominance, namely in Hattingen (48,000 to 25,000), Hagen (62,000 to 23,000), Schwelm (62,000 to 10,000) and Altena (78,000 to 15,000).

The political traditions of Westphalia in the twentieth century reflect to a large degree the influence of the social and religious composition of the population. In the late nineteenth century the emergence of political Catholicism in the shape of the Centre Party introduced a new force in Westphalian politics, which became the dominant political constellation by the end of the century. Parallel to this was the development of socialism in the shape of the SPD, based on and supported by the increasing working class population which concentrated in the region as the industrialisation of the Ruhr area accelerated. The latter force tended to gain at the expense of the strong liberal tradition acquired in the mid-nineteenth century. By the time of the 1912 election the Centre Party and SPD dominated the political arena:

	DK	RP	Anti-Semites	Centre	NL	FVP	SPD	
1903 Westphalia	3,5%	0,9%	4,2%	40,4%	19,2%	4,7%	24,7%	
1912 Westphalia	2,9%	0,9%	5,5%	34,0%	14,3%	7,0%	28,8%	
1912 Reich	9,2%	3,0%	2,9%	16,4%	13,6%	12,3%	34,8%	35)

The strength of the Centre Party rested on the sizeable Catholic population and an efficient organisation which harnessed support dating back to the 1870's. ³⁶⁾ As a consequence of the 'religious tie' between Catholics and the party, the Centre was able to bridge the diverging economic interests of

35) J. Bertram, Die Wahlen zum Deutschen Reichstag vom Jahre 1912. Parteien und Verbände in der Innenpolitik des Wilhelminischen Reiches, Düsseldorf, 1964, pp.206-207.

36) On the development of the Westphalian Centre Party see R. Morsey, 'Die Zentrumsparlei im Rheinland und Westfalen', in W. Försch (ed.), Politik und Landschaft, op. cit., pp.11 ff..

its supporters and to overcome the discrepancy between its clerical-hierarchical structure and the class divisions associated with modern industrial society. 37)

In the light of the strong influence of the Catholic clergy, numerous electoral districts in Westphalia, both in the rural and urban areas, were so safe for Centre Party candidates that virtually no electioneering was needed to retain the seats. 38) The complacency which this situation created was increasingly undermined from around 1890 by the difficulty which the party encountered in retaining its working class votes in face of the SPD challenge, which by the turn of the century began to make inroads in the Centre's working class vote. 39) By the early twentieth century the Centre also found that the religious tie was no longer as potent a factor in rallying support as it had been at the time of the Kulturkampf. At the height of this church/state conflict some 80 per cent of Germany's Catholic population had voted for the Centre Party. 40) By the time of the 1912 election the party had lost considerable ground. On the national level it was supported by only 54.6 per cent of the voting (nominal) Catholics. In Westphalia the slump was not so severe. In the electoral districts of the Regierungsbezirke Münster and Minden the average return for the 1903, 1907 and 1912 elections stood at 83.2 per cent and 72.6 per cent respectively. 41) In the province as a whole, however, the Centre Party suffered a relative decline in its share of the vote. In the election of 1903 the party had secured 40.4 per cent of the poll, gaining 229,037 votes out of the total of 567,769. By 1912 the share of the poll had dropped to 34.0 per cent, with 261,645 votes out of 770,701. 42) The party clearly failed to attract a significant number of the many Catholics in the increased electorate. Many Catholics were sufficiently emancipated by 1912 to determine their own political choice, a development viewed with concern by

37) Ibid., p.17.

38) Ibid., p.16.

39) Ibid., p.18.

40) Ibid., p.23.

41) R. Morsey, Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, Düsseldorf, 1966, p.43.

42) Bertram, op. cit., pp.206-207.

the leaders of the party and Catholic Church alike. Despite the drop, the Centre Party of Westphalia still enjoyed considerable support, roughly double the national average of 16.4 per cent.

The strength of the SPD, the second most important party by the turn of the century, did not as yet, given the concentration of industry in central and western Westphalia, adequately reflect the support it might theoretically expect. Despite the large working class population concentrated in the province by the twentieth century, the SPD could only secure 28.8 per cent of the vote in 1912, some six per cent lower than the national average of 34.8 per cent. The reasons for its relatively poor performance lay in the rapidity of the industrialisation which made it more difficult to organise the expanding working class. The presence of a strong Centre Party also had its effect.

As in the case of the Centre Party, the socialist movement of the early twentieth century could look back on a long history of struggle within Westphalia. The first organisational activity dated back to the 1860's, during which Lasallean supporters had established a series of party cells in western Westphalia. ⁴³⁾ The early socialist movement lacked organisational strength and suffered particularly from the anti-socialist legislation of the 1880's. ⁴⁴⁾ It was only from the 1890's onwards, with the removal of the restrictive legislation, that the SPD could create an organisational framework and develop a more centralised party structure in the province. It was only then that the party could effectively challenge the dominance of the Centre Party and make inroads on the resilient liberal vote. Regional peculiarities mitigated the success of the socialists. The mining areas of the Ruhr saw the influx of much new labour, the bulk of which was not only Catholic, but also Polish, which created problems for the party's propaganda machine. ⁴⁵⁾ Support was

43) H. Lademacher, 'Vom Arbeiterverein zur Massenpartei', in Först (ed.), Politik und Landschaft, op.cit., pp.53 ff..

44) The anti-socialist legislation led to a noticeable decline in the SPD's electoral support in the Hagen area; see H. Lambers, Die Revolutionszeit in Hagen. Die politische Entwicklung von 1917 bis 1924 in Hagen und Haspe, Hagen, 1963, p.12.

45) Lademacher, in Först, op. cit., p.80.

spread very unevenly within the province. The socialists were strong only in the urban centres. Agitation in the rural areas had little success due to the lack of an agrarian programme. The major impact was restricted to the growing conurbations of the Ruhr region, where sizeable branches were organised in the 1890 to 1914 period. ⁴⁶⁾ It was only in these areas that the SPD secured large-scale support. ⁴⁷⁾

The third major force in Westphalian politics in the pre-war period was liberalism, the full potential of which was blunted in the late nineteenth century by the fragmentation of the liberal vote between the National Liberal Party and the Progressive Liberal Party. Combined, the liberals by 1912 still commanded 21.3 per cent of the Westphalian vote, roughly on a par with the national average of 25.8 per cent. The National Liberals failed to attract new support in the early twentieth century. With a poll of 108,673 in 1903 and 110,301 in 1912, the overall share of the NLP declined from 19.2 per cent to 14.3 per cent. Detrimental to the party's fortune was the defection of important industrial interests in the province to conservative forces of the Right. Westphalian industrialists became increasingly disenchanted with the National Liberals. The belief that the NLP was failing to represent their economic interests led to the transfer of the bulk of their support to the Reichspartei in the post-1907 period. ⁴⁸⁾ The Progressive Liberal Party fared a little better, though its support was relatively low in comparison to that of the NLP. Between the elections of 1903 and 1912 the Progressive Liberals were able to almost double their support, from 27,245 votes in 1903 (4.7 per cent) to 53,738 votes in 1912 (7 per cent). Despite the increase, the position of the party deteriorated due to the challenge of the SPD in the urban centres,

46) Dortmund, Bochum, Recklinghausen and Hagen all had sizeable SPD branches reflecting the high degree of working class elements concentrated in these towns - R. Lützenkirchen, Der sozialdemokratische Verein für den Reichstagswahlkreis Dortmund-Hörde, Dortmund, 1970, p.136.

47) In the 1912 election the highest SPD returns in Westphalia were secured in Hagen (46.2 per cent), Dortmund-Hörde (44.8 per cent), and Bochum (36.8 per cent); Lützenkirchen, op. cit., p.135.

48) Bertram, op. cit., pp.29-30.

and the loss of what had been safe seats to the latter. 49)

Political conservatism was only poorly supported in Westphalia in the pre-1914 period. The conservative vote was fragmented by the existence of three parties, the DKP, the RP, and the Anti-Semites. Unlike the Centre Party, the SPD, and the Liberals, which were supported more evenly throughout the province, the DKP and RP were only of some significance in the Protestant, rural areas of north-eastern Westphalia. 50) The combined vote of the two parties did not reach 5 per cent in the 1903, 1907 and 1912 elections. Of greater significance were the Anti-Semites, aided by the support of the Christlich-Soziale Partei. 51) The Anti-Semites increased their support between 1903 and 1912, polling twice as many votes in 1912 as the DKP and RP combined. The existence of the influential Christlich-Soziale Partei in parts of the province, primarily the Siegen area, which enjoyed the backing of the Protestant clergy, explains the support. 52) The party was largely confined to Westphalia, and played an important role in southern and north-eastern Westphalia. 53) Initially dominated by working class members, it became an expression of middle class discontent by the turn of the century, with exceptionally strong support in the circles of Non-conformism in the Siegerland. Beyond Siegen itself, the predominantly Protestant towns of Bielefeld, Herford and Minden were the only urban centres in Germany in which the party found any support.

49) This occurred in the electoral district of Hagen-Schwelm, which was held by the Progressive Liberals in all the elections between 1871 and 1907; in 1912 the SPD secured the seat. Lambers, op. cit., pp.11-13.

50) In the electoral district of Münster-Minden the DKP and RP polled 15 per cent of the vote in the 1912 election - W. Hartenstein, Die Anfänge der Deutschen Volkspartei 1918-1920, Düsseldorf, 1962, p.70.

51) Bertram, op. cit., p.212.

52) Bertram, op. cit., p.195.

53) For this and the following see W. Liebe, Die Deutschnationale Volkspartei 1918-1924, Düsseldorf, 1956, p.16. Further K. Buchheim, Geschichte der Christlichen Parteien in Deutschland, Munich, 1953, pp.261 ff..

Chapter 2. THE REVOLUTION IN WESTPHALIA 1918 TO 1919.

The Outbreak of the Revolution and the Formation of the Councils. ¹⁾

Until 8 November 1918 the revolutionary movement in Germany which emanated from Kiel and spread rapidly to the ports of Hamburg, Bremen and Wilhelmshaven, symbolised by the appearance of soldiers' and workers' councils, did not affect Westphalia, despite the appearance of similar councils by 7 November in Cologne to the west, and Hanover to the north. ²⁾ Even the Ruhr region was relatively peaceful, and work continued, unaffected by the events so close by. This was surprising in view of the history of unrest in the industrial areas of the province, with the strikes of 1917, and January and August 1918. ³⁾ There were also the wage struggles of the pre-war era, especially the strike of 1912, which had left bitter memories in the minds of the workers. Despite the concentration of working class masses in the Ruhr complex, the revolutionary movement was stimulated to a large degree by the actions of elements from outside the province, who initiated the process by which Westphalia, too, followed the developments occurring elsewhere.

The impact of the revolutionary movement, once it made its appearance, varied. Though revolutionary centres formed in the Ruhr, especially in Gelsenkirchen, Dortmund and Hagen, and in the garrison towns, especially Münster, the tone of the hastily formed workers' and soldiers' councils was moderate, the most constant appeal by these revolutionary organs reminded the population to maintain 'Law and Order'. In some areas, the revolution

1) Among the extensive literature dealing with the German Revolution see especially the works by F.L. Carsten, Revolution in Central Europe 1918-1919, London, 1972; A.J. Ryder, The German Revolution of 1918. A Study of German Socialism in War and Revolt, Cambridge, 1967; W. Tormin, Zwischen Rätediktatur und sozialer Demokratie. Die Geschichte der Rätebewegung in der deutschen Revolution 1918/1919, Düsseldorf, 1954. Specific aspects of the revolution are dealt with by E. Kolb, Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918-1919, Düsseldorf, 1962; P. von Oertzen, Betriebsräte in der Novemberrevolution, Düsseldorf, 1963.

2) Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., pp.32-49.

3) H. Spethmann, Zwölf Jahre Ruhrbergbau, Band I, Aufstand und Ausstand bis zum zweiten Generalstreik April 1919, Berlin, 1928, pp.84 ff..

at the outset made hardly any impact at all. In county Siegen, for example, the major concern of the Landrat was that the costs for the locally produced placards with the Chancellor Max von Baden's 'Appeal to the German Nation' should be met by the state. ⁴⁾ Of any local revolutionary movement there is no mention.

The first workers' and soldiers' councils in Westphalia were generally formed through the actions of revolutionary elements from outside the province, supported by local groups or individuals from the ranks of the MSPD and the USPD. In Hagen the revolution was set in motion by a train-load of soldiers and sailors, who on 8 November occupied the railway station, and forced the local army guard to give up their arms and remove their cockades. ⁵⁾ On the morning of the following day a group of thirty appeared before the mayor, who was informed of the intention of organising a workers' council. This was to take over the administration of the town jointly with the existing town authorities, who were to function as before, with the one important difference that in future the measures and actions of the town authorities were to be subject to the approval of the workers' council. At the meeting it was decided that the workers' council was to be elected by the working population of Hagen: the factories were to close and the workers were to elect the council at a public meeting. It was also agreed that the workers' council was to be responsible for the maintenance of law and order in conjunction with the existing police authorities. The police were to be given red armbands, inscribed with the words "Workers' Council"; each policeman was also to be accompanied by a worker. Transgressions against property, especially looting, were to be severely punished. ⁶⁾

The events which occurred in Hagen were not uncommon in the first phase

4) Report by the royal (sic) Landrat, Siegen, 12 November 1918: SAM I PA/342.

5) The situation in the Hagen area has been analysed by H. Lambers, op. cit., pp.46 ff..

6) Report by the Oberbürgermeister, Hagen, 9 November 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844. Hagener Zeitung, 9 November 1918.

of the revolution in Westphalia. Outside influences were also at work in Recklinghausen, where the revolution was triggered off by a train-load of military personnel, mainly sailors, coming from the direction of Cologne. Here 'excesses' were committed during the night from 8 to 9 November. The guards of the railway station were overpowered and prisoners released, before the group moved off in the direction of Hamm. 7) In Münster too the revolution was partially guided by forces from outside the province. Here the army took the initiative, as army units garrisoned in Westphalia were to do elsewhere. The command of the Seventh Army Corps at Münster took the lead on 8 November by approaching the chairman of the local trade union council. Concerned about 'saving the situation', they urged him to form a soldiers' council. 8) In the evening of 8 November a deputation from the soldiers' council of Kiel arrived in the town, presumably to set things in motion. The group joined some 400 soldiers stationed in the town in a street demonstration, which led to the release by the assembled mob of 300 army deserters from the military prison camp, as well as the release of some 60 prisoners from the local jail, including a number of dangerous criminals, whose recapture was authorised by the workers' and soldiers' council constituted on 9 November. 9) In Paderborn the local garrison mutinied on 9 November, disarmed the officers, released prisoners and robbed the prison safe. 10) Peace returned to the town after the formation of a workers' and soldiers' council. 11) In Minden and Bielefeld the soldiers' councils were formed peacefully, the commanders of the garrisons retaining control of the troops. The soldiers' councils organised in the two towns quickly made contact with the soldiers' council of the Seventh Army Corps at Münster. The reason of the

7) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 14 November 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

8) Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., p.48.

9) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 14 November 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

10) Police report, Paderborn, 9 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

11) Report by the Landrat, Paderborn, 10 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

soldiers' discontent was simply their desire to 'see an end to war'. In both towns the soldiers were quietened by the intervention of trade unionists, 'actively calming the troops in the barracks and in the streets'. 12) In Bielefeld these efforts met with success, judging from a contemporary newspaper report. Describing the events of the 'night of the revolution', the Westfälische Zeitung was able to report that 'not a drop of blood flowed and law and order were not endangered: the theatres and cinemas remained open. On Saturday 9 November - a remarkable fact in these difficult days - the attendance at the cinemas was more lively than usual. Even the tram service was not subjected to any interruptions. On Saturday not one factory was idle in Bielefeld.' 13) In Halle i/W. the soldiers' council was also formed in a peaceful fashion. 14) On 9 November members of the locally stationed Infantry Regiment 55 asked their commanding officer if they could form a council. He discussed the idea with his officers, and then agreed to the request. At a meeting attended by the whole battalion a soldiers' council was elected, which was composed of three officers (including the commanding officer by a unanimous vote), three non-commissioned officers and nine other ranks. The meeting decided that no weapons were to be carried, that the officers' mess was to close, and that compulsory military saluting was to end, though the officers were to retain their badges of rank. 15)

The events which took place in Warburg are of special significance in that the situation there demonstrates the confusion of the first few days of the revolution: power could be seized, albeit only temporarily, by anyone possessing sufficient nerve. Here the revolution was set in motion by an individual called Altermamm, who, dressed in an officers' uniform, appeared alone in Warburg on 9 November. Basing his 'authority' on the workers' and

12) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Minden, 9 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

13) Westfälische Zeitung, 11 November 1918.

14) Telegram, Landrat, Halle i/W. to Minden, 9 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

15) Report by the Landrat, Halle i/W., 21 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

soldiers' council of Cassel, he disarmed ten officers and thirty men of the Hofgeismaer Dragoons, took over the control of the troops guarding the local railway station, set up his own guard, and authorised the creation of a workers' and soldiers' council. The detachment of troops allowed this to occur because Altermann stated that in the afternoon more members of the soldiers' council of Cassel would appear in the town. When it was pointed out to him that Warburg belonged to the Regierungsbezirk of Minden, Westphalia, and not of Cassel, Altermann replied that such boundaries no longer existed. On 12 November, representatives of the workers' and soldiers' council of Cassel did indeed appear in the town, but only to arrest Altermann, who was accused of a number of 'excesses'. After this episode, the town community set up its own elected workers' and soldiers' council at a public meeting on the evening of 12 November. It was conservative in composition, formed of five representatives of the soldiers and workers, and ten from the 'bourgeois circles' of the town. 16)

In the adjoining County Büren the revolution evolved more hesitantly. Until 10 November no unusual events occurred, though, as the Landrat stated, 'the events in nearby Paderborn, and the formation of councils in Lippstadt, created unrest in the population'. The signal for revolutionary developments came from the military, 'soldiers returning on leave removing the badges and cockades of their unsuspecting comrades'. The commander of the army camp in the nearby village of Holthausen anticipated trouble. He asked the civilian authorities to take over the contents of the camp to prevent the looting of army property. On 10 November the soldiers of the Holthausen camp formed a provisional soldiers' council, which immediately contacted the Inspectorate of Prison Camps at Münster to find out what exactly should happen. The Münster authorities stated that the process of closing the camp should be reversed, and the existing administration be retained. This proved somewhat difficult,

16) Report by the royal (sic) Landrat, Warburg, 22 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

'since only a limited number of troops had remained, a large section of the troops having "gone on holiday", partly without permission, and partly with leave granted by the troops to themselves'. 17)

The appearance of workers' and soldiers' councils in the first few days of the revolution was a spontaneous reaction by the population to the events of Kiel and elsewhere. In Westphalia the council system rapidly appeared once the lead had been given by a few towns. Councils mushroomed everywhere, all but the smallest communities being affected by the development in the course of November. There was no specific pattern characterising the movement, beyond its spontaneous nature, and no centralised direction; indeed, the absence of organisation in general is the most notable feature. Hence the variety of responses, with different forces at work, though the influence of the Majority Socialists predominated, even in the industrial centres. 18) Only in rare cases did the Independent Socialists dominate the composition and policy of workers' and soldiers' councils, namely in Hagen, where the USPD retained sole control over the council, and in Recklinghausen, where the Independent Socialists had a two-thirds majority over the Majority Socialists. 19) Generally the workers' and soldiers' councils were based on the support of that part of the population which believed in socialism. This did not mean in practice that they ignored the wishes of the rest of the population or confined their appeal strictly to the working class. The workers' and soldiers' council of Dortmund-Hörde, for example, though composed of delegates from the unions, MSPD, USPD, and the army, tried to make contact with moderate opinion in general, and appealed to the 'whole population of the Wahlkreis Dortmund-Hörde'. 20) In several towns the workers' and soldiers' councils from the start even included non-socialist elements. In Bottrop and Buer the workers' and soldiers' council

17) Report by the royal (sic) Landrat, Bären, 13 November 1918: SAD MI IP/565.

18) Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., p.153.

19) Lambers, op. cit., p.49; Police report, Gelsenkirchen, 9 April 1919: SAM I PA/342.

20) "Aufruf des Arbeiter- und Soldatenrats Dortmund", November 1918: reprinted in Spethmann, op. cit., pp.367-368.

included from the beginning representatives of the Christian trade unions and the Centre Party. 21) In the small town of Warburg middle class influence prevailed from the outset, ten of the fifteen strong workers' and soldiers' council being drawn from the 'bourgeois circles' of the town. 22) In Bielefeld the composition of the peoples' council quickly altered to include middle class representatives. Initially the peoples' council was composed of members who received their mandates from the leaders of the SPD and the trade unions, with the proviso that the representation would be broadened once the 'new situation was clarified'. By the 13 November an appeal by the peoples' council stated that 'the situation has now been clarified and it is necessary that all who want to help should be called upon for support'. Thus the provisional council suggested that the new peoples' council should be elected from 'representatives of the SPD, the trade unions, and the other professional, economic and political groups in the town and the county of Bielefeld, who are prepared actively to support the democratic and social re-construction of Germany'. 23)

The moderation of the Bielefeld Socialists also influenced the events of the adjacent county of Halle. At a public meeting in Halle i/W. on 12 November the Majority Socialist Schreck addressed a crowd 'representing all elements of the community', and advocated the setting up of peoples' councils in the county. The local Landrat approached him after the meeting, and the two decided that within the county every Amt should elect a peoples' council, which in turn should send delegates to a peoples' council for the whole county. These councils, it was agreed, were to be composed of representatives from all the professions. The existing bureaucratic machinery then took over to implement the agreed measures. On 13 November the Landrat presided over a meeting attended by the local Amtmänner in order to discuss the situation. At the meeting he found

21) Kolb, op. cit., p.91.

22) Report by the royal (sic) Landrat, Warburg, 22 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

23) Pamphlet - "Zur Wahl des Volksrates im Stadt- und Landkreis Bielefeld", 13 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

that in the Bergholzhausen Amt there was already a movement afoot designed to elect a peoples' council. At the meeting it was decided to hold elections in each Amt, which were to take place between the 16 and 18 November. In Halle i/W. itself, the public meeting at which the council was to be elected was called and controlled by the soldiers' council of the town, and proved to be a lively, though peaceful affair. The meeting agreed with the line taken earlier on 13 November, namely, that the peoples' council was to be composed of members drawn from the various occupations. The elections in the county produced a number of broadly based peoples' councils, with a membership of between ten and fifteen. In the Amt Halle the elected body balanced diverse interests and was composed of four workers, four representatives 'of the town' (a factory owner, a civil servant, a businessman, and an artisan), and four representatives of agrarian interests (a landowner, a small-holder, a hired agricultural worker, and a farmhand). In Halle and Werther the chairmen of the local peoples' councils were workers, in contrast to Versmold and Bergholzhausen, where a teacher and a small factory owner respectively headed the councils. In each Amt the Amtmann also belonged to the council, in 'an advisory capacity'. These small local councils in turn elected a peoples' and soldiers' council for the county, the composition of which also showed a mixture of broad interests. Eight of the fifteen members were 'workers', the rest represented agrarian, industrial, commercial and professional interests. 24)

The developments in Bielefeld and Halle, which led rapidly towards a wider representation of society within the councils, were not unusual. One can see especially in the smaller towns a much more active participation of non-working-class elements in the council movement. In the small industrial town of Iserlohn the workers' and soldiers' council, dominated by the Majority Socialists, within the first week of the revolution showed its willingness to share its powers with the middle class element of the town by including bourgeois representatives in

24) Report by the Landrat, Halle i/W., 21 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

an expanded workers', soldiers' and peoples' council. 25) In nearby Menden a peoples' council operated from the very beginning, as happened also in Lippstadt to the east. 26) In County Höxter the term "peoples' council" was the norm. A report on one of these, that of Steinheim, specifically noted that two of its thirteen members were women - the only reference to female participation in the numerous reports on the council movement in Westphalia. 27)

A variety of terms was used to describe the councils which appeared everywhere in the urban areas, the name given to them reflecting diverse situations and attitudes in the localities. The council movement also affected the rural communities, farmers and farm labourers coming together in the numerous peasant councils which appeared in November 1918. In County Büren, for example, there were 54 peasant councils or peasants' and peoples' councils, most of which were very small, with a membership of ten or less. 28) In County Halle the 37 peasant councils, or peasants', peoples' and workers' councils, or peasants' and agricultural workers' councils far outnumbered the six workers', soldiers' and peoples' councils of the county. 29) In County Hamm, 65 of the 74 communities (Gemeinden) had peasant councils: in 31 of the villages peasant councils were the only revolutionary organisations. 30) In County Warburg all but two of the 46 communities which organised councils had peasants' and farm workers' councils, compared with only two workers' and soldiers' councils. 31) The great majority of the peasant councils in Westphalia had a small membership, each community organising itself, often in isolation from developments in the surrounding area. There were exceptions to the fragmented organisational form. In County Bielefeld there were only eight peasant councils, but each represented a number of villages, which accounted for the large membership of each council,

25) Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 16 November 1918.

26) "Zusammenstellung der Arbeiter- und Soldaten- und Bauernräte"; Report drawn up by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

27) Report by the Landrat, Höxter, 4 January 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

28) Report by the Landrat, Büren, 28 January 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

29) Report by the Landrat, Halle i/W., 6 February 1919: SAD MI IP/662.

30) "Zusammenstellung . . .", Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

31) Report by the Landrat, Warburg, 4 January 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

ranging from 32 to 52. ³²⁾ One must also note that in some counties, strongly agrarian in character, such as Brilon, where one would expect peasant councils to have been organised, there were none, while there were some in highly industrialised areas, such as the Bochum region, where one would not expect to find any separate peasant councils. ³³⁾

The variations in the council movement of Westphalia reflect the lack of any centralised organisation on the regional or even county level. The movement depended very much on local initiative: local conditions and leadership influenced the shape and nature of developments. Here one finds one of the major weaknesses of the movement, that is, its failure to develop cohesion at the outset of, and in the months following, the revolution. The lack of any uniform or centralised organisational structure of the councils is shown clearly in an analysis of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils in the Regierungsbezirk Arnsberg, drawn up in January 1919. ³⁴⁾ Thus in County Siegen one finds a systematic, pyramid form of organisation, all the workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils in each of the ten Ämter recognising the soldiers' council of the Eighteenth Army Corps. In the adjoining County Olpe, on the other hand, only two of the twenty workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils recognised any superior authority: one workers' and soldiers' council subordinated itself to the workers' and soldiers' council of Frankfurt-on-Main, and one workers' council to the soldiers' council of Siegen. In County Altena there was more variation still in that the majority of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils recognised the soldiers' council of Arnsberg as their immediate superior authority, a few looked towards the soldiers' council of the Eighteenth Army Corps, and several accepted no superior organisation at all, especially the rural workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils. The peasant councils were especially prone to pursue their existence in isolation.

32) Report by the royal (sic) Landrat, Bielefeld, 9 January 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

33) "Zusammenstellung . . .", Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

34) For the following see "Zusammenstellung . . .", Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

In County Bochum, for example, the great majority of the workers' and soldiers' councils recognised the workers' and soldiers' council for County Bochum, whereas none of the peasant councils subordinated themselves to this or any other regional council. A similar situation existed in County Schwelm, where none of the peasant councils attached themselves to any superior body.

Thus the lack of contact of many of the numerous local councils, especially those in the rural areas, with the more powerful county or provincial councils was a common feature in the Arnsberg Regierungsbezirk. The reason may well lie in the relative unimportance of many of the small councils which appeared in 1918, which more often than not had only limited aspirations beyond the preservation of 'law and order'. Some of the councils were much too small to have been effective on even the local level. In County Hamm, for example, the workers' council of Herringen consisted of but one individual as did the soldiers' council. Herringen is an exception, it is true, but few of the rural councils had a membership extending beyond a dozen.

If one looks at the more important workers' and soldiers' councils of the major towns an entirely different picture emerges. These were often the focus of organisation on the county level, had much wider connections with the regional councils, and collectively played a dominant role in the council movement of Westphalia. With the exception of Lüdenscheid and Hamm, the workers' and soldiers' councils of the province - Bielefeld, Bochum, Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen, Hagen, Minden, and Münster - acknowledged as their superior authority the moderate soldiers' council of the Seventh Army Corps at Münster. A framework of contact existed at this level, which could have been built up to organise and co-ordinate the work of the councils of the important urban centres. But very little was accomplished in this direction by the end of 1918. The council movement in Westphalia as a whole remained fragmented until it gradually vanished in a piecemeal fashion in the spring of 1919.

The Purpose and Aims of the Westphalian Councils.

Local conditions and personalities determined to a large degree the nature of the revolution in Westphalia; this accounts for the variations in organisation,

attitude and response. The moderation shown by the workers' and soldiers' councils in Westphalia as a whole, including those in the Ruhr area, was remarkable in the first few months of the revolution; this was undoubtedly due to the fact that almost everywhere Majority Socialist and trade union influence predominated. Their moderation shaped the movement which, rather than being used as a revolutionary instrument to seize political power and democratize the administration and society in general, emerged to protect the limited, though important, gains of November, namely the democratization of the political system for which the Socialists had worked in the pre-war period. The realization of this objective constituted a revolution in the minds of many supporters and party officials of the MSPD, and the major concern of many became stabilisation, not revolution. That is why the councils were primarily concerned to see that law and order prevailed. Even the few councils controlled by the Independent Socialists shared this attitude. The first proclamation of the USPD controlled soldiers' and workers' council of Hagen emphasized the need to preserve law and order and even threatened publicans with a general prohibition of the sale of alcohol if they sold 'excessive amounts' to the general public. 35)

Beyond the general objective of preserving 'law and order', there was much confusion as to the role the councils should or could play. The movement was after all spontaneous and unorganised. The situation on the national level was initially unclear, and the events and opportunities the situation presented were open to different interpretations. On the local and provincial level this led to the drafting of programmes by the individuals in charge, reacting to the conditions of the area. Different councils stressed different points. In the industrialised areas the workers' and soldiers' councils tended to be more aggressive in their demands, often including far-reaching assertions as to their function and power within the framework of the newly created Republican

35) Proclamation "Arbeiter! Bürger!", issued by the Workers' and Soldiers' Council and Stadtverwaltung of Hagen, dated 9 November 1918 - reprinted in Lambers, op. cit., Appendix, p.4.

system. In the Ruhr towns economic demands relating to working conditions, pay, and the nationalisation of basic industries were voiced, which, naturally enough, did not figure in the programmes of the councils in rural areas. There was consensus of opinion on one point, however, and that related to authority. All the more important and effective councils secured diverse controlling functions over the authorities in their sphere of operation.

Typical of the appeals made to the population by the councils is that of the workers' and soldiers' council of Dortmund-Hörde. This proclaimed its desire to 'strive for political and social changes in the name of democracy and socialism'. This vaguely phrased task was to be realised and accomplished without 'disturbances and economic chaos', in partnership with the 'existing authorities'. The council demanded wide powers and control over the military personnel in the Dortmund area, control over industrial concerns, banks, and the means of communication, as well as the introduction of the eight-hour day. The council also demanded the recognition of its authority and power, which, it stated, were vested in it 'by the trust of the people'. These demands were made to the Dortmund town council in the first instance, which agreed to them, acknowledged the existence of the council and provided it with office facilities in the town hall. ³⁶⁾ In the months following, Dortmund was administered by the existing bureaucracy in conjunction with the workers' and soldiers' council, a compromise solution to the problem of what status the new councils were to have in the new state, which was to be discussed at national level in the months following. It is worth noting that the councils did not claim total authority, but only the right of joint control with the existing authorities. This indicates that there was little desire to seize total power, as advocated by some radical elements at a later stage, for the opportunity was there in November.

Joint control was the common form of government in Westphalia following

36) "An die gesamte Bevölkerung im Wahlkreis Dortmund-Hörde" - pamphlet issued by the workers' and soldiers' council of Dortmund-Hörde; full text in Spethmann, op. cit., pp.367-368.

the emergence of the councils. In Hagen, the mayor agreed to the workers' and soldiers' council's claim to parity at the outset of the revolution because he desired to prevent bloodshed and disorder. 37) In many towns agreement between local councils and the administration was reached on a friendly basis. In Husen, near Hagen, the local officials came to an amicable settlement with the workers' and soldiers' council and both parties agreed to the joint administration of the affairs of the community. 38) In Bielefeld too a peaceful and harmonious situation existed between the town's officials and the peoples' and soldiers' council. Here the co-operation of the two bodies was 'orderly and without friction'. In accordance with the provisions of an agreement reached at the formation of the soldiers' council, the Landrat of the county and the mayor of the town attended all the important sessions of the council in an advisory capacity. 39) In County Dortmund the soldiers' council allowed the authorities to retain the initiative in that it only met to discuss the problems of the county with the heads of the administrative departments at the invitation of the Landrat. 40) In southern Westphalia all the councils, without exception, co-operated with local officialdom in the many tasks facing the region in the crucial months following November. 41) Nowhere in the province did the claims of the councils extend to the right of full or sole control, as they did in Düsseldorf in the western section of the Ruhr. 42) The working relationship with the higher bureaucracy on the Regierungsbezirk level was also generally harmonious. The Regierungspräsident of Minden was able to report to his superior at Münster that he had the impression that the workers' and soldiers' council of Minden was very interested in maintaining a smooth and frictionless relationship with him. 43)

37) Report by the Oberbürgermeister, Hagen, 9 November 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844; Lambers, op. cit., p.47.

38) Spethmann, op. cit., p.104.

39) Report by the Landrat, Bielefeld, 19 November 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

40) "Zusammenstellung . . .", Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

41) Ibid..

42) Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., p.153.

43) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Minden, 23 November 1918: SAM I PA/342.

The workers' and soldiers' councils were in many ways forced to reach agreement with the existing local and regional bureaucrats. The problems facing the towns and the region were very grave, and the difficulties could only be overcome without creating chaos if the existing machinery was allowed to continue to function. And chaos and disorder were the last thing that all but a few extremists wanted. This accounts for the fact that, although there existed friction between the councils and the old bureaucracy, the many civil servants of the province were left at their posts. There are few instances of councils removing officials, and even where there were such attempts, these were not always successful, especially if a senior official was involved. The recorded cases of dismissals or attempted dismissals are not very numerous. The largest number affected by a purge authorised by a council occurred in Bottrop, where the local workers' and soldiers' council prevented seven policemen from fulfilling their duties. In Buer the workers' and soldiers' council suspended a police inspector and four other members of the force. ⁴⁴⁾ In Eickel near Gelsenkirchen, friction also arose between the workers' council and the police. Here the council on its formation in November declared that all officials should continue to fulfil their duties as before, provided that they accepted the authority of the council. Though all officials made this declaration, one policeman was suspended because 'he was not particularly liked by the members of the workers' and soldiers' council', who accused him of not carrying out their orders. ⁴⁵⁾ There is record of only one instance in which a higher official met with the opposition of a council. This happened in Herford, where the deputy mayor was removed by the workers' and soldiers' council because he objected to orders issued by the council concerning security. But even he was reinstated after the intervention of the mayor, though the latter was forced to take over the control of the police at the insistence of the workers' and soldiers' council. ⁴⁶⁾

44) Report by the Oberpräsident, Minden, 26 December 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

45) Report by the Landrat, Gelsenkirchen, 10 December 1918: SAM I PA/342.

46) Report by the Oberbürgermeister, Herford, 13 November 1918: SAM I PA/562.

In general the bureaucracy of Westphalia bent with the wind and quietly continued to function side by side with the revolutionary organs produced by the upheaval of 1918, regardless of the sentiments which they most certainly harboured against these organs. The officials sat tight and survived as an intact force until the situation changed and the councils disappeared as political organisations in the course of 1919. The moderation of the Majority Socialists undoubtedly contributed to the fact that the administration was not imbued with a socialist spirit by appointing officials who believed in the newly emerging democracy. ⁴⁷⁾ One can understand the hesitancy of the socialists, which allowed the old machinery to survive, even if one criticises their lack of confidence in their own ability. From the beginning the councils were in a difficult position, given the problems facing them and the lack of any clear idea as to what their function should be in the general confusion of November. This uncertainty over status was only gradually removed by the Provisional Government. In November 1918 the great emphasis was on stability in view of the shock of defeat and the problems which beset a Germany exhausted by the demands of war and peace. In the light of the problems of the control and distribution of raw materials for industry and food for the population, of demobilisation, and the servicing of the intricate machinery of a highly developed state, the retention of the existing military and civil authorities and their expertise was considered a necessity by the bulk of the forces engaged in the revolution. The fact that the council movement was spontaneous and unorganised, caught the socialist parties unaware, a situation which led to much confusion. In Westphalia moderation prevailed; the councils sought at most the right to supervise authorities within their sphere of activity. On the national level the situation was also unclear, with conflicting interpretations as to the function of the councils in relation to those of

⁴⁷⁾ At the party conference of the SPD in June 1919 it was pointed out that only one party member had been appointed Regierungspräsident, and only one as Landrat (out of a total of 36 and 470 respectively). Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., p.131.

the Provisional Government. An attempt to resolve the problem led to a proclamation by the Executive Committee of the German workers' and soldiers' councils on 23 November 1918, which defined their functions and power. 48)

The limitations of the councils were clearly defined following a dispute in the Regierungsbezirk of Minden over the extent of the powers wielded by the workers' and soldiers' councils. In a letter from the Ministry of Finance the limitations of the councils to interfere with financial matters were stated precisely: 'Workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils are only permitted to exercise a continuous control alongside the administration; but they are not permitted to interfere in the administration of finance nor in judicial matters; they cannot demand administrative measures which contravene the existing laws or which would prevent the timely conclusion of normal business'. 49) That such statements were necessary as late as the end of December reflects the fact that various agreements reached at the national level, such as that of 23 November, were too vague. It did not necessarily follow that the national agreements would be accepted by all the councils, now could they curtail the activism of some workers' councils led by more radical elements; the situation on the local level was determined largely by the personalities of the leaders of the councils.

There are only a few examples of councils pursuing arbitrary actions which were abnormal in relation to general council activity in the province. In Hagen the USPD controlled workers' and soldiers' council exceeded its authority from time to time, though usually it co-operated with the town administration and rarely intervened in administrative matters. 50) Of interest is the attempt by the workers' and soldiers' council to exercise judicial power through the formation of a 'Standgericht'. Created on 30 November, the court

48) For the definition of the councils' powers and the conflicting views between the Executive Committee (representing the views of the workers' and soldiers' councils of Berlin) and the Provisional Government see Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., pp.128-130.

49) Letter from the Finanzministerium (FMI 14758), Berlin, 31 December 1918: SAD MI IP/562.

50) Lambers, op. cit., p.50.

was never used. If it had been the decisions would not have been lawful any-way. 51) At times the workers' and soldiers' council of Hagen would also react to criticisms by an arbitrary use of power. Thus a teacher was removed for agitating against the council. The chief editor of the Westfälisches Tageblatt was imprisoned for a few days and his paper prohibited because of his attacks in several leaders on the workers' and soldiers' council. 52) These developments alarmed the town's bourgeois circles and led to protest and resentment, as did the council's authorisation of searches in the homes of the richer citizens of the town. 53) In nearby Altena too house searches caused the bourgeois element some concern. Here the leaders of the workers' and soldiers' council arbitrarily decided to 'carry out searches in homes occupied by those with a taxed income of over 10,000 Marks'. 54) In Iserlohn a deputation from the local workers' and soldiers' council appeared in the office of the town's police inspector and removed 22 confidential files containing reports on political activities of local individuals drawn up prior to the revolution. But even here order was observed, a receipt being given for the files before their removal. 55) A more serious instance of harassment of officials was the arrest of the Landrat of Hamm by a deputation from the soldiers' council of Hamburg. This turned up in Hamm to investigate the affairs of the local workers' and soldiers' council and its supposed laxity and lack of vigour. No reason was given for the Landrat's arrest, nor, as it turned out, did the members of the Hamburg deputation have the authority to act in this manner. The Landrat was released after the intercession of the mayor of the town. In his report to the Regierungspräsident, the Landrat asked for steps

- 51) The Reich government was very concerned with the retention of full responsibility for law and control of the judiciary in face of council claims - see "Anordnung des Rates der Volksbeauftragten", 5 December 1918: SAM I PA/371.
- 52) Freie Presse, 30 January 1919.
- 53) See, for example, the complaint by Rechtsanwalt Schemm, Hagen, 2 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.
- 54) See the letter of complaint to the Landrat, Altena, 21 December 1918; similarly, letter of protest to the Regierungspräsident of Arnsberg, Altena, 18 December 1918: SAM I PA/342.
- 55) Police report, Iserlohn, 2 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

to be taken to protect the authorities from such molestations. 56)

Such instances of 'over-enthusiasm' of councils were rare. Far from disturbing the peace in the unsettled months following the events of November, the existence of the numerous councils did much to prevent unrest and excesses. They were indeed a major stabilising factor in the post-November period. The leaders of the councils were not revolutionaries in the true sense of the word and their moderation guided and controlled the more radical elements of the population. The trust of the bulk of the working population in the councils, which were seen as their creations and protectors of their interests, more often than not led by Socialists or Trade Unionists of standing in the locality, is one of the chief reasons for the relatively peaceful nature of the revolutionary period. In conjunction with the local administration, these bodies engaged in a great variety of tasks which had little to do with any implementation of pre-conceived political ideas or plans of action designed to secure total power for any specific section of society. The tasks the councils set themselves in the months following the revolution were determined largely by the problems of the time: control over and distribution of food supplies, clothing, fuel and raw materials; protection of property; supervision of demobilisation; stamping out of the black market and profiteering in general. These problems were tackled jointly by the authorities and the councils, mutual interests drawing the two 'sides' together. There were few variations from this pattern. The councils were also active in the enforcement of order, even if this meant a conflict with the more radical elements from the ranks of the working class. The determination to protect the peace was very real. The soldiers' council of Recklinghausen, for example, moved quickly at the outset of the revolution against 'bands of Poles and radical elements of the Left' which prevented the miners of Bottrop and Gladbeck from working. Not only did forces organised by the council quell the disturbances, but they also

56) Report by the Landrat, Hamm, 8 December 1918: SAM I PA/342.

armed the miners of the affected pits to prevent further unrest. 57) The soldiers' council of Minden also 'did its utmost to keep order', its members moving against radical elements which caused temporary unrest. 58)

The councils active in Westphalia quickly placed themselves behind the Provisional Government, supporting the moderate line taken by the Majority Socialists even after the split with the Independents. Typical of the position taken by the councils is that of the influential soldiers' council of the Fourth Army at Münster. In November the council backed the Majority Socialist line on the need for elections to a National Assembly and issued a proclamation calling for the election in order that 'the will of the whole of the German people can be ascertained'. In a warning to the radical Left, the soldiers' council stated that 'we have not thrown off the old shackles in order to subject ourselves to a new, extreme dictatorship of a small minority (Bolshevik)'. 59) A few weeks later the same council issued another general proclamation designed to quieten the fears of the population, clarifying the attitude and intentions of the council movement in general. The pamphlet pointed out that the councils were not 'unfriendly forces. Our programme is your programme and that of the People's Representatives: peace, work and bread. We have placed ourselves behind the government because it wants the best for all of us'. 60) Similar expressions of support for the Provisional Government and its policies came from other councils. Thus the Minden soldiers' council on 26 November called for the meeting of a National Assembly. 61) The workers' and soldiers' council at Hattingen declared as one of its main objectives 'the safeguarding of the attainments of the revolution, especially in relation to the Spartacists and hence support for the SPD government'. 62) Even small,

57) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 20 November 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

58) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Minden, 27 November 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

59) Pamphlet issued by the Soldiers' Council of the Fourth Army, Münster, November 1918: SAM I PA/342.

60) "Zur Frage der Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte", issued by the Soldiers' Council of the Fourth Army, Münster, 5 December 1918: SAM I PA/342.

61) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Minden, 27 November 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

62) "Zusammenstellung . . .", Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

relatively insignificant councils, for example the Altenbochum workers' and soldiers' council in County Bochum, stated their intention to 'prevent counter-revolutionary attempts from the Right and the Left'. The workers' and soldiers' council of Störmede in County Lippstadt saw its special duty as 'co-operating in the development of a democratic constitution', while 'fighting against every attempt by a minority to replace the democratic system of government by a one-sided dictatorship'. ⁶³⁾ The United Workers', Peoples' and Soldiers' Council of the county of Herford went so far as to issue an appeal to the local population to join the 'Free Corps of the Government', to 'safeguard Germany from incursions in the east' and protect the population from the 'terror of the Spartacists'. ⁶⁴⁾

The Rural Councils.

If the councils of the urban and industrialised regions of Westphalia distinguished themselves by their moderate political outlook, the numerous councils in the rural areas were positively conservative. In a political sense they played no role; their function in the province, as elsewhere with the exception of Bavaria, was primarily economic. ⁶⁵⁾ The conservative nature of the peasant councils is related to their origin and the generally conservative attitude of the rural population. Unlike the workers' and soldiers' councils, the peasant councils were not spontaneous creations; if we exclude Bavaria, peasant councils in general appeared hesitantly. ⁶⁶⁾ Moreover, the first initiative behind the creation of special organs to protect agricultural interests came from the conservative "War Committee of German Agriculture", which was strongly influenced by the Bund der Landwirte. ⁶⁷⁾ At the beginning of

⁶³⁾ Ibid..

⁶⁴⁾ Report by the Landrat, Herford, 5 February 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

⁶⁵⁾ For the role of the peasant councils outside Bavaria see Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., pp.204-209; also H. Muth, 'Die Entstehung der Bauern- und Landarbeiterräte im November 1918 und die Politik des Bundes der Landwirte', Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte, 21, 1973.

⁶⁶⁾ Muth, op. cit., p.3, cites the case of the peasants' council of Mönchengladbach.

⁶⁷⁾ Muth, op. cit., pp.5 ff..

November 1918, immediately before the military collapse, the "War Committee", without reference to the government, formulated the idea of authorising the formation of rural committees designed to protect farmers from unrest, to ensure a continued supply of foodstuffs to the towns, and to combat profiteering and the black market. These rural committees were envisaged as representations not only of agrarian interests, but of the population as a whole. The proclamation by the "War Committee" on 9 November, calling on the population to form rural committees, was overtaken by the events of the revolution. On 12 November the new Provisional Government also proclaimed the need for 'peasant councils', which Scheidemann thought would be roughly the same as the committees called for by the "War Committee". ⁶⁸⁾ A further proclamation followed on 25 November, which called for the creation of councils in which both farmers and agricultural labourers were to be represented. This appeal was in response to pressures exerted by the unions of agricultural labourers, which wanted their membership to be represented in the rural councils; to this idea the government responded with an amended proclamation designed to give parity on the councils between employers and employees. ⁶⁹⁾

The various appeals created confusion in the general uncertainty of the time and led to variable results. Important here is that neither of the Provisional Government proclamations of 12 and 25 November specifically cancelled the independent action of the "War Committee" of 9 November. Thus peasant councils appeared as a result of the initiative of the "War Committee" acting through its regional organs, and as a consequence of the proclamations of the new government. If the response was to the latter, two types of councils emerged: before 25 November "peasants' councils", and after 25 November "peasants' and farm labourers' councils". In Westphalia the Kriegswirtschafts-amt of the province issued the proclamation of the "War Committee" through its

68) Ibid., p.12.

69) Carsten, Revolution . . . , p.203; Muth, op. cit., p.15.

subordinate organisations attached to the Landratsamt, and asked for a speedy implementation of its recommendations. 70) At about the same time the Regierungspräsident of Minden also instructed the Landräte to form 'local committees according to the suggestions of the "War Committee", which would best be described as peasants' councils'. He suggested further that on their formation they should in turn form "County peasants' councils", which should establish contact with the workers' and soldiers' councils of the area. 71)

The initiative from the side of the conservative interests of the "War Committee" produced peasants' councils in Westphalia whose composition was in line with the idea that the widest interests were to be represented. In County Lüdninghausen the peasants' councils of the 18 rural districts comprising the county were composed of 40 farmers, 38 gentlemen farmers, 27 Kötter, 19 agricultural labourers, 15 artisans, 5 leaseholders, 3 miners, 2 civil servants, a station master, a building contractor, a teacher, a nightwatchman, and a foreman. 72) Peasants' councils in the area were not always what they appeared to be.

The bulk of the Westphalian rural councils emerged before the second government proclamation of 25 November introduced a new pattern in the form of peasants' and agricultural labourers' councils. Thus the 135 peasants' councils noted in the Regierungsbezirk Arnsberg far outnumbered the peasants' and agricultural workers' councils. Only in County Hamm was there a numeric balance of the two forms. 73) That the majority of the agrarian councils were conservative in their attitude is underlined by their subsequent history. Their conservatism is related to their origins and to the fact that in Westphalia the conservative agricultural organisations were exceptionally strong and used their influence to moderate and control the rural developments. Their influence and moderation was furthered by the Westphalian Landwirtschaftskammer, which

70) SAM Kreis Steinfurt, Landratsamt/626, Bl.196 - Muth, op. cit., p.21.

71) Rundverfügung, 14 November 1918: SAM Regierung Arnsberg, I 15/14, Bl.3 - Muth, op. cit., p.21.

72) SAM Kreis Lüdninghausen, Landratsamt/383 - Muth, op. cit., p.20.

73) "Zusammenstellung . . .", Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 January 1919: SAM I PA/342.

urged the agrarian organisations actively to involve themselves in the rural movement. 74)

The conservative nature of the agrarian councils is reflected in their general non-involvement in the political developments of the period. The peasants' councils and the peasants' and agricultural workers' councils were active primarily in the supervision of the collection of surplus foodstuffs, the allocation of the delivery quotas to the farms, the suppression of the black market, and the protection of the general interests of the farming community. In persuading the farmers to fulfil their chief role, namely supplying the needs of the towns, the peasant councils exercised some influence. Certainly they were called upon by the authorities to exhort the rural population to make greater efforts in times of acute shortage. 75) The interests of the rural population mobilised by the peasant council system involved above all protection of the agrarian interests in a period of uncertainty. The farmers were afraid of the attention given to the rural areas by the urban population at a time of food shortage. The close proximity of the Ruhr conurbation and the restlessness shown by the urban population reinforced their anxiety. They banded together to protect their farms and villages against outsiders, using the council system as the organisational form. Very few of these councils developed any political interest. Nor were they encouraged to do so by their urban counterparts, for the workers' and soldiers' councils did not envisage the peasants' councils as equal partners in an order based on the council system. This attitude adopted by the urban councils did not escape the notice of the leaders of the peasant councils, as was made clear at a conference of the peasants' and agricultural labourers' councils of Westphalia held at Hamm in March 1919. Here the leaders of the rural councils voiced their discontent. Although the conference decided to form a provincial peasant

74) "Landwirtschaftskammer Westfalens an die Kreis- und Ortsvereine . . .", 15 November 1918: SAM Regierung Arnsberg I 15/14, Bl.4 - Muth, op. cit., p.24.

75) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 10 January 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

council, it declined to involve itself in the elections to the second national congress of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils because the workers' and soldiers' councils 'have so far excluded the country population from political life and have as best they could hindered the development of the peasants' and labourers' councils. 76) Antagonism also developed between the two groups because the peasant councils could not see eye to eye with the urban councils concerning the issues of food supplies and black marketeering. 77)

The conflict between town and country undermined the unity of the council movement in general. The apathy of the rural population in Westphalia in the revolutionary period was not inevitable, for there were isolated instances of peasant participation in revolutionary activity which indicate that the peasants too had grievances and could be mobilised. In County Wittgenstein, the poorest county in the province, the rural population on the estates of Prince Richard von Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg and of Prince August von Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, was mobilised by the demands for agrarian changes made by the workers' and soldiers' council of Berleburg. In a proclamation on 2 December the council demanded the immediate expropriation of the princes and the end of their 'crown rights', and called for the distribution of their 'crown estates' among the local community. There were also claims for compensation 'for damages to the roads of the area caused by estate traffic'. 78) The claims were declared unlawful by the Ministry of Justice. In a telegram to the local Landrat it was stated that 'forest and other lands of the princes in the area

76) Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., p.208.

77) That the peasantry were benefiting from the high black market prices for foodstuffs is clear from the reports by the local authorities. Complaints against the systematic invasion by profiteers from the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial region were voiced by the authorities; see the reports by the Landräte of Hörter, Lübbecke and Minden: SAD MI IP/562, and the reports by the police, Bochum, and the Landrat of Herford: SAD MI IP/563. The result of farmers selling on the black market can be judged by the figures of egg deliveries made in Kreis Lübbecke: from January to the beginning of March 1918 these numbered 128,500 eggs; the same period in 1919 saw the collection of only 13,500 - Report by the Landrat, Lübbecke, 4 March 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

78) Report by the Landrat, Berleburg, 27 December 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

are their legally protected property. The workers' and soldiers' council is not permitted to sequester or distribute the land'. 79) The intervention of the Landrat calmed down the situation in the area, though the continued unrest and demonstrations by the peasantry on the estates of Prince August of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein were only quelled after the prince had placed his castle and estates in Wittgenstein under the protection of the more conservative workers' and soldiers' council of Laasphe. 80) Involved in the demands for agrarian reform in the area were above all the smallholders of the region who were especially affected by landhunger. Their problems were largely of their own making, according to the Landrat, the consequence of too many cattle on their holdings, the resulting overgrazing leading to a desire to extend their farms. It was this section of the rural population which was involved in the unrest and backed the demands of the Berleburg workers' and soldiers' council, which in turn acted as a mouth-piece for their desire for agrarian reform. 81)

A similar situation developed in County Büren in 1919, where a movement was organised in the Fürstenberg community designed to acquire lands belonging to the Count of Westphalia. In Fürstenberg the peasantry were mobilised by Weiss, a former sailor from Essen, who organised and headed a local committee "For the Recovery of Lost Rights". The agitation by Weiss and his supporters caused fears by the Landrat that 'one day the count's castle and the estate buildings will go up in flames'. To back up their claim for more land, the committee was able to induce the workers and employees working on the count's estates to withdraw their labour. The report by the Landrat pointed out that 'similar events had taken place in Fürstenberg in 1848, when similar demands had been made and the castle had been stormed and sacked in order to achieve

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- 79) Telegram to the Landrat from the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, 31 December 1918: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.
 80) Report by the Landrat, Berleburg, 2 January 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.
 81) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 31 January 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

them'. 82) The movement also attempted to put pressure on the government to intervene on behalf of the rural population. A new organisation led by Weiss, calling itself the "United Farmers of Fürstenberg" threatened to stop deliveries of meat, unless their demands were met. 83)

The events in the counties of Wittgenstein and Büren indicate that the rural population could be mobilised by a programme of agrarian reform. Had the peasants' councils produced a programme appealing to the self-interest of the rural population the response would have been there. But no such reform plans were formulated, and it was left to a few isolated movements to demonstrate the possibilities present in the countryside for radical action. The efforts of a small minority were too weak to have much impact in the face of opposition by the government and local authorities, and nothing came of them.

The Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.

Demands for economic and social reform moved the urban masses to a much greater degree than the question of political reform. The workers' and soldiers' councils were generally quite satisfied with the initial gains of the revolution, especially the introduction of a democratic system of government. This important advance satisfied the majority; there was little support from the councils and the working class in general for a system of government based on the council system. There were many, however, who felt a deep desire for economic reform, a desire acknowledged by socialists of all shades and opinion, including the leaders of the MSPD and the trade unions. The latter, though moderate in their political outlook, were forced to retain a radical stance on the question of social and economic reforms in order to retain control over their supporters, especially those of the Ruhr industrial centres. The great emotional issue was that of socialisation, with the demand for the nationalisation of the mining industry being expressed constantly. Accompanying

82) Report by the Landrat, Büren, 5 July 1919: SAD MI IP/563.

83) Report by the Landrat, Büren, 23 July 1919: SAD MI IP/563.

this were demands for a shorter working day, more pay, and the redress of old grievances, such as the payment of wages withheld by the employers during the strike movement of 1912. In the weeks following the political upheaval of November the miners were granted certain concessions, such as the eight-hour day introduced from 1 December, plus higher pay, but discontent among the rank and file continued. The gains made by the working class were too small in view of the steep rise in the cost of living, which swallowed up the benefits derived from the pay increases.⁸⁴⁾ Despite the appeals by the miners' unions to their members, exhorting them to continue work in order to avert a national economic collapse, widespread unrest and strikes occurred.⁸⁵⁾ A general lack of will to work soon made itself noticeable, especially in the dramatic fall of the productive capacity man per shift, estimated at 75 per cent below the pre-war level.⁸⁶⁾ Concessions to the miners whetted their appetite for more. Increasingly the working man was drawn towards the more radical Independents and the Spartacists. These elements to the left of the Majority Socialists used the discontent of the working class to further their position and influence. Radical economic demands were put forward by the Spartacists and sections of the USPD. Once these found a wider response the programme of the radicals was widened, the major emphasis shifting to political demands. A sharp division quickly developed between the programme of the extreme Left and the more moderate approach taken by the MSPD and the many workers' councils controlled by its supporters. By the turn of the year the split within the ranks of the Socialist movement had deepened. As a result antagonism and hatred developed, which was to have tragic consequences for the labour movement in the nineteen-twenties.

The lack of progress on the nationalisation issued led to increasing

- 84) The situation of the working population in general was depressed in view of the fall in the value of real wages, which had fallen by 25 per cent during the war years; see Ryder, op. cit., p.216.
- 85) "An die Bergarbeiter". Proclamation by the miners unions of 15 November 1918. Full text in Spethmann, op. cit., pp.360-361.
- 86) Report by the Bochum IHK, Bochum, 13 January 1919: WWA K2/806.

discontent among the workers of the Ruhr. 87) Their sense of grievance was heightened by the decision in favour of immediate socialisation passed by the first national congress of the workers' and soldiers' councils in December 1918. In Westphalia this caused the erratic strike movements to become more widespread and to assume a more political character. To confuse the situation further, radical elements of the Left attempted to emulate the Spartacist rising in Berlin in January 1919. 88) The reaction to the Berlin developments was most serious in Dortmund. A local putsch by the Spartacists led to a series of skirmishes in the town between workers and the local police and the Sicherheitswehr. Yet beyond the occupation of the offices of the Westfälische Allgemeine Volkszeitung little was achieved by a mob of some 1,500, led, as it turned out, by the chairman of the Independent Socialist Party. 89) Another centre of unrest was Buer, where the 'Spartacists' declared a general strike and demanded the following: removal of the Ebert-Scheidemann government; the introduction of a six-hour working day; the payment of wages withheld during the strike of 1912 (with interest); a once only additional payment of 200 Marks plus 20 Marks per child for married men, 100 Marks for females over 18 years of age, and 50 Marks for those under 18. This mixture attracted the support of 'several thousand miners', who went on strike, while mobs occupied and partially plundered the town hall. 90)

Such outbursts of violence and unrest were to occur only too often in the months following. The radicalism and activism of the workers was the result of economic hardship allied to increasing disenchantment with the government which was unable or unwilling to remedy the social and political ills of the day. 91) When all else failed, the workers took the law into

87) For the situation in Westphalia see von Oertzen, Betriebsräte . . . , op. cit., pp.110 ff..

88) See E. Waldmann, Spartakus. Der Aufstand von 1919 und die Krise der deutschen sozialistischen Bewegung, Boppard, 1967, p.254.

89) Report by the Oberbürgermeister, Dortmund, 8 January 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844..

90) Report by the Buer town authorities, 10 January 1919, and report by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 11 January 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

91) The demands of the workers were also strongly influenced by the dominant position of the employers which was especially evident in the Ruhr; on this, von Oertzen, Betriebsräte . . . , op. cit., p.128.

their own hands to speed up the reforms which they considered essential. What particularly aroused their anger was the socialisation issue. On this the Provisional Government stalled continuously as the decision was to be left to the National Assembly. Before the elections to this assembly were held, the workers' and soldiers' councils of the Rhenish-Westphalian region decided to take action. The lead was given by the workers' and soldiers' council of Essen, which simply proclaimed the socialisation of the coal mining industry on 9 January 1919. The offices of the Coal Syndicate and the Mining Corporation were occupied on 11 January, and a Social Democratic judge, Ruben, was elected "peoples' commissar" to control the process, with assistants drawn from the SPD, USPD, and KPD. These actions and the election of Ruben and his "Committee of Nine" were endorsed by a meeting of the workers' and soldiers' councils of the Ruhr, which met at Essen on 13 January.⁹²⁾ A circular issued by the Verband der Bergarbeiter Deutschlands stated that 'this decision has been reached because the majority at the conference took the view that the present State Government was not pressing energetically enough on this question'.⁹³⁾ A pamphlet distributed by the workers' and soldiers' council of Essen viewed the decision arrived at by the conference as one of 'tremendous significance', since as a consequence 'the political revolution has become a social, an economic revolution'.⁹⁴⁾

To formulate the policy of socialisation was easy; to implement it proved impossible. Since the mines were Prussian state property, the Prussian authorities were, naturally enough, strongly opposed to any scheme of nationalisation. Opposition also came from the central government, which rejected the demands of the "Committee of Nine". The lack of progress, and the negative attitude

92) P. von Oertzen, Betriebsräte . . . , op. cit., p.113 ff.; Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., p.154.

93) "Rundschreiben des Alten Verbandes", 14 January 1919; full text in Spethmann, op. cit., pp.380-381.

94) Pamphlet by the Workers' and Soldiers' Council of Essen: "An die Bevölkerung des Ruhrkohlengebietes", 15 January 1919; complete text in G. Hillmann, Die Rätebewegung, Reinbek, 1971, pp.100-103.

of the government caused even more intensive and widespread strike action. This produced chaos in the mining areas of the Ruhr, and unrest in the province as a whole as the effects of the lack of coal hit the industrial centres of Westphalia. Attempts by the miners unions to calm the workers proved futile in the face of the emotions aroused by the whole issue. ⁹⁵⁾ The situation became more explosive because the discontent was used by elements of the radical Left for their own political ends. Efforts by the police, acting in conjunction with the workers' and soldiers' councils and the Sicherheitswehren controlled by them, proved insufficient to quell all outbreaks of extremism. In Hervest, County Recklinghausen, where the workers' council and the Sicherheitswehr consisted primarily of "Spartacists", law and order broke down, and appeals were made by the authorities to the regional government for the use of troops to restore order. ⁹⁶⁾ The appearance of troops in Hervest aggravated the situation even further, and led to the proclamation of a general strike on 16 February. This act by the extremists split the socialist movement and destroyed the precarious unity of the Left, which had become increasingly strained on a variety of political issues. The leadership of the trade unions and of the MSPD on 17 February dissociated themselves from the appeal for a general strike. The division of opinion in the ranks of the socialist parties, mirrored in the working class, became sharper. Reaction to the appeals of the moderates and radicals depended on the activism of the groups involved and their relative strength in the localities. Generally the workers' and soldiers' councils controlled by the Majority Socialists (i.e. the bulk of the councils in Westphalia) dissociated themselves from the appeal for a general strike. The moderate workers' and soldiers'

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- 95) The relationship between the Ruhr miners desire for nationalisation and the strike movement in the area is especially emphasized by P. von Oertzen in his article 'Die grossen Streiks der Ruhrbergarbeiterschaft im Frühjahr 1919', Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 6, 1958, pp.241 ff..
- 96) Telegram by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, to Oberpräsident, 14 February 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

council of Dortmund-Hörde strongly condemned the strike movement, and denounced the efforts of 'a crazy bakers' dozen' who were trying to prevent the miners from working. 97)

For the "Spartacists" and their supporters much more than the issue of socialisation was at stake. They wanted political power, especially control over the council movement. They used the occasion to remove the moderate councils and the Sicherheitswehren in those towns where they gained the upper hand. In Bottrop the workers' council, the majority of the members of the Sicherheitswehr and the police were imprisoned by the Independents and Communists after the latter had seized control of the town. 98) An attempt to repeat the same pattern in Gelsenkirchen was prevented by the soldiers' council and the Sicherheitswehr acting in unison with the police. Here the MSPD and the USPD had fallen out on 15 February following an attempt by the Independents to seize control of the Sicherheitswehr. After this incident the Majority Socialists in the Sicherheitswehr joined the police in order to 'resist an expected attack by the Spartacists', which finally materialised on 19 February. 99) In Wanne the "Spartacists" were joined by the local soldiers' council, while in Bochum they received the assistance of the Sicherheitswehr, which joined the Spartacist movement as a unit. 100)

In the strike movement of February the main effort by the Spartacists was confined to the triangle Bochum-Dortmund-Recklinghausen. Despite their efforts, often involving intimidation and the use of force, a general strike did not develop and the scattered strike movement rapidly weakened in the last week of February. By 25 February only nine per cent of the miners was

97) For the attitude of the Dortmund-Hörde Council see their pamphlet: "Arbeiter! Genossen! Was geht vor?"; reprinted in Spethmann, op. cit., p.216.

98) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 20 February 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

99) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, concerning "Spartacist unrest in the Bezirk", 7 May 1919: SAM I PA/342.

100) Staatstelegramm, Generalkommando VII, 25 February 1919: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

still involved, and many of these were not working on account of damage to pit machinery rather than because of voluntary participation in the strike. ¹⁰¹⁾ The tension remained, however, and local disputes could easily result in strikes and eruptions of violence and unrest. On 24 March a conflict between workers and local security forces in Witten, which cost seventeen lives, gave renewed vigour to the strike movement in the Dortmund-Witten-Bochum region. ¹⁰²⁾ This blended in with the second major strike wave which affected the coal mining regions of Rhineland-Westphalia in April 1919. This proved a lengthy dispute, more political in character than the February struggle. The government reacted vigorously almost from the outset, appointing Severing as Reichskommissar for Rhineland-Westphalia on 7 April and imposing a state of siege on the region. One of Severing's first acts was to ban private and public meetings of the Independents and the Communists, curbing the freedom of action of those whose prime objective was the overthrow of the government. The demands of the strikers, apart from calling for the introduction of a six-hour working day, were almost solely political in nature. Typical of the type of programme pursued was that of the miners in Castrop, who demanded the recognition of the workers' and soldiers' councils, the formation of a 'revolutionary workers' militia composed of class conscious workers', the disbandment of the Free Corps, the establishment of relations with the Soviet government, and the disarming of the police and the Sicherheitswehren in the industrial region. ¹⁰³⁾

Although the strike lasted for most of April, reflecting the intensity of feeling of sections of the working class, the government's vigorous action prevented a repetition of the chaos and disorder witnessed in the February strike. In one important aspect the situation in April was very different in that the supporters of the MSPD from the start actively assisted the government

101) Staatstelegramm, General kommando VII, 25 February 1919: Oberpräsidium Nr. 5844.

102) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 7 May 1919: SAM I PA/342.

103) Report by the Bürgermeister, Castrop, 9 April 1919; report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 7 May 1919: SAM I PA/342.

efforts to prevent unrest. In many Ruhr towns the Majority Socialists had already experienced rough treatment by the radicals where the latter seized control, and the moderates needed little persuasion to prevent a repetition. The various councils and Sicherheitswehren coped more often than not with the threat posed by the radicals without recourse to military help, for working class moderates and radicals alike were united in their hostility towards the Reichswehr formations. Security forces organised by workers gained considerable prestige in the Ruhr. In the Gelsenkirchen region, strongly affected by the February unrest, a Volkswehr composed entirely of Majority Socialists was in control, not only of the town of Gelsenkirchen, but of the Witten-Castrop-Sodingen-Langendreer-Werne region. ¹⁰⁴⁾ According to a report drawn up by the Regierungspräsident of Arnsberg, covering the region in which the strike found strong support in the districts of Bochum and Dortmund, only one major conflict developed during April, and that occurred not in a mining town, as one might expect, but in Iserlohn. ¹⁰⁵⁾ Here the Spartacists were able to seize control in the middle of April before the Free Corps "Lichtschlag" restored the situation. ¹⁰⁶⁾ By the end of April the strike movement had petered out. The strikers had lost many of their leaders who were imprisoned by the military, including the members of the "Committee of Nine". The political demands of the strikers were ignored by the government and the issue of socialisation lost its explosive character. The only gain resulting from the strike was the introduction of the seven-hour working day. ¹⁰⁷⁾

The Collapse of the Council Movement.

At the beginning of 1919, amid the uncertainty created by the industrial unrest, the council movement in Westphalia lost momentum and gradually collapsed. The split in the socialist ranks over the position of the councils

104) Report by the Police President, Gelsenkirchen, 21 April 1919: SAM I PA/342.

105) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 7 May 1919: SAM I PA/342.

106) Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 15, 16, 17, 19 April 1919; further F. Kühn, Liebes Altes Iserlohn, Iserlohn, n.d., p.228.

107) Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., p.155.

in the political order became increasingly obvious. The decline in the importance of the councils was not surprising in view of the attitude of the Majority Socialists. The MSPD had always rejected the idea that the council system should become the ultimate authority of the new republic, a concept supported by the radical Left, especially by the USPD. In the minds of the Majority Socialists the council issue posed a clear-cut choice between democracy and Bolshevism, Bolshevism being equated with the council system. 108) At the first National Congress of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in December 1918 the Majority Socialist view concerning the position of the councils carried the day. The congress rejected the motion proposed by the Independents which called for the councils to be the basis of the constitution of a 'Socialist Republic'. 109) The congress also called for the election of a National Assembly, to be held in January 1919, a decision which indirectly determined the future of the council system.

At the local level, as at the national level, the election of representative assemblies on the basis of a democratic franchise made the workers' and soldiers' councils superfluous, not only, naturally enough, in the eyes of the authorities, but also in those of the Majority Socialists. In many towns the workers' and soldiers' councils did not see themselves as permanent institutions anyway. Even the Hagen council, totally controlled by the USPD, made it clear as early as 13 November 1918 that it would dissolve itself voluntarily as soon as the town's population had elected a new local parliament. 110) In Westphalia the election of local representative assemblies triggered off a movement towards dissolution. It became increasingly difficult to justify the continuation of the councils which were to control local parliaments with MSPD majorities. At a conference of the workers' councils of the Regierungsbezirk

108) D. Schneider & R. Kuda, Arbeiterräte in der Novemberrevolution. Ideen, Wirkungen, Dokumente, Frankfurt, 1968, p.25.

109) E. Matthias, Zwischen Räten und Geheimräten. Die Deutsche Revolutionsregierung 1918/1919, Düsseldorf, 1970, p.108; Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., pp.133-134.

110) Lambers, op. cit., p.48.

of Arnsberg a MSPD speaker stated that the 'election of local representative assemblies on the basis of the democratic franchise' had placed the workers' councils in an 'untenable position'. Not only did the appearance of local parliaments raise the difficult question of how the councils were to be financed, it also resulted in 'the dissolution of the workers' councils in a large number of places in which the Majority Socialists had secured a majority'. The speaker went on to say that 'in other places a spirited desire had been voiced to dissolve the councils because one finds it stupid to exercise control over parliaments having socialist majorities'. ¹¹¹⁾ In several towns councils voted for their dissolution without waiting for the outcome of local elections. In Iserlohn the workers' council voted fifteen to three for its dissolution on 18 February 1919, two weeks before the election of the town parliament. ¹¹²⁾ Even the soldiers' council of the town, led by Communists and composed solely of "Spartacists", vacated its office in the town hall and dissolved itself on 12 March 1919. ¹¹³⁾ The workers' and soldiers' council of Warburg ended its existence even earlier than the Iserlohn workers' council. ¹¹⁴⁾

In some localities the council movement collapsed since councils were ineffective. In Paderborn the peoples' council was particularly weak and ineffectual. The only evidence of its existence was a proclamation of its prospective tasks. A report by the Landrat in February 1919 noted that the council had achieved nothing and that there had been no control on his actions at all. The report observed that 'the members of the peoples' council are increasingly recognising the fact that little or nothing can be achieved in the field of the supply of foodstuffs, the improvement of which it had designated as an especially important aspect of its work'. The report also stated that in the county the peasants' councils tried to fulfil a few functions, but failed in their efforts. As for the Paderborn soldiers' council, 'it had never

¹¹¹⁾ Report on the conference in the Westfälische Allgemeine Zeitung, 1 July 1919.

¹¹²⁾ Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 19 February 1919.

¹¹³⁾ Police report, Iserlohn, 27 March 1919: SAM I PA/342.

¹¹⁴⁾ Report by the Landrat, Warburg, 15 February 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

developed any activity and disappeared quietly a few days after its formation in November 1918'. ¹¹⁵⁾ In view of its shadowy existence it is not surprising that the chairman of the peoples' council of Paderborn, at the time of its voluntary dissolution on 23 February 1919, used the occasion to observe that his period of office ' had provided him with many disappointments'. ¹¹⁶⁾ The peoples' council of Lügde was even more of a nonentity. This elected body never met formally since it was never 'installed in office by the town administration'. ¹¹⁷⁾

The stopping of financial assistance to the councils, following the elections of local parliaments, caused the dissolution of many councils, for without financial means and office facilities the local councils were unable to carry on. Both the smaller, less influential councils, and the large and important ones were hit by this development. In Hückeswagen and Lüttringhausen it was the bourgeois majorities in the local parliaments which decided to refuse all funds to the workers' council in April 1919. ¹¹⁸⁾ In Gelsenkirchen, the important workers' council complained to the Central Council of the difficult position it found itself in after the local elections because its functions were very ill-defined and the town would no longer recognise its right of control. ¹¹⁹⁾ Here a meeting of the town parliament on 30 May 1919 decided by a majority of two to stop all further payments to the workers' council. In consequence of this the workers in several trade unions, with the support of the Majority Socialists and Independents, called for a general strike to force a reversal of the decision. The appeal met with little response and the council quietly folded up. ¹²⁰⁾ In Hagen an almost identical development occurred. ¹²¹⁾

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- 115) Report by the Landrat, Paderborn, 1 February 1919: SAD MI IP/562.
 116) Report by the Oberbürgermeister, Paderborn, 1 March 1919: SAD MI IP/562.
 117) Report by the Landrat, Höxter, 4 January 1919: SAD MI IP/562.
 118) Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., p.176.
 119) Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., p.176.
 120) Report by the Police President, Gelsenkirchen, 31 May 1919: SAM I PA/342.
 121) Lambers, op. cit., pp.88-89.

The strength of the council movement was further weakened by the intervention of the Seventh Army Command, which arbitrarily dissolved several soldiers' councils within the province. At the beginning of 1919 the soldiers' councils had become increasingly concerned about their position. At a conference of the district soldiers' councils of North West Germany, held at Hagen on 2 February 1919, at which the soldiers' councils of Münster, Hagen, Minden, Gelsenkirchen, Soest, Dortmund, Bochum, Rheine, Recklinghausen, Bielefeld and Paderborn were all represented, there was much concern about the changes which had taken place since November. Protests were especially directed against the formation of Free Corps, and the 'progressive deprivation of the rights acquired in the revolutionary period'. 122) That the fears for the future expressed at the conference were justified was seen within a fortnight. The military authorities moved against the soldiers' council of the Seventh Army Corps on 11 February 1919. It was dissolved after it had refused to recognise a government decree of 19 January confirming the officers' power of command. 123) The dissolution of the General Soldiers' Council was followed by a re-organisation of the soldiers' councils in Westphalia under the direction of General von Watter, in the course of which the district soldiers' councils were broken up, and the rights of the soldiers' councils were pruned, especially their right to demand provisions and payment of expenses. 124) Within Westphalia there was little reaction to the events in Münster, and it was left to the workers' and soldiers' council of Essen to threaten a general strike in the Ruhr and armed opposition to the Free Corps if the Münster soldiers' council was not reinstated and von Watter was not punished. 125) The protest had no effect, and von Watter continued to dissolve soldiers' councils which did not meet with his approval, as is witnessed by the fate

122) Volksstimme, 5 February 1919.

123) Ryder, op. cit., p.211; see also "Bekanntmachung", Generalkommando VII AK Münster, 11 February 1919: SAM I PA/342.

124) Proclamation by the Seventh Army Command, Münster, 20 February 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

125) Ryder, op. cit., p.211.

of the soldiers' councils of Herford and Lübbecke, which were dissolved on 8 March 1919. ¹²⁶⁾ The army also interfered with workers' councils under the pretext of restoring order following the wave of strikes in the spring of 1919. The Free Corps "Lichtschlag", instrumental in the arrest of the bulk of the members of the soldiers' council of Münster in February, in May arrested many Independent members of the workers' council of Hagen and the neighbouring towns. There was no reason for the wave of arrests, since those affected were men who were moderate in their action and outlook, and opposed to any revolution or violent action. ¹²⁷⁾

Conflict and resultant division within the ranks of the socialist parties also contributed to the weakening of the council movement. Local conflicts between Majority Socialist supporters and Spartacists (a term applied indiscriminately by contemporaries to anyone to the left of the Majority Socialists) often led to the exclusion of the radicals from the "official" councils. These subsequently faced the pressure applied by the authorities as well as the hostility of working class elements supporting more left-wing parties. The net result was a decline in the power and influence of the councils. This is what happened in Gelsenkirchen as early as February 1919. Here the Majority Socialists controlled the Sicherheitswehr and the workers' council and enjoyed the support of the bulk of the local working class. ¹²⁸⁾ This did not prevent the Independents from attempting to seize control, a putsch on 14 February resulting in the occupation of the public buildings after the Independents had disarmed the Sicherheitswehr. The Majority Socialists reacted to the take-over by joining the police, and in a counter-coup disarmed the "Spartacists". After the arrest of the Independent and Spartacist leaders, the Majority Socialists were left in total control of the local workers' and

¹²⁶⁾ Report by the Seventh Army Command, Münster, 10 March 1919: SAD MI IP/562.

¹²⁷⁾ Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., p.67; Lambers, op. cit., pp.91-92.

¹²⁸⁾ In the local election to the National Assembly the MSPD secured 37,000 votes as against the 4,000 USPD votes.

soldiers' council and the Sicherheitswehr.¹²⁹⁾ A similar pattern evolved in Ickern, County Dortmund. Here the workers' and soldiers' council elected at the outset of the revolution enjoyed 'the trust of the overwhelming majority of the population'. A local putsch on 11 January 1919 by the Independents replaced the council with one dominated by the radical elements of the community. This council was not elected, and the views of the bulk of the working population, mainly miners, were not represented, indeed were ignored. The new council assumed wide powers, which led to much unrest, the 'embitterment of the population being based on the fact that the present workers' and soldiers' council has assumed rights which were neither granted to it through the revolution, nor authorised by the present government'.¹³⁰⁾ The workers' and soldiers' council of County Dortmund, which investigated the matter, could do little about the situation.¹³¹⁾ The offending workers' and soldiers' council was removed in February by the Majority Socialist controlled Sicherheitswehr of Bochum, and a new workers' and soldiers' council was elected by the Majority Socialists.¹³²⁾

The Majority Socialists used a variety of tactics to exclude their rivals. There was a noticeable tendency in the spring of 1919 for MSPD controlled councils to prevent certain parties from participating in the elections for new councils. Though this practice discriminated against certain middle class interests, it is clear from the Westphalian examples that the MSPD primarily aimed at excluding the parties further to the Left. This occurred in Bochum, where the council elections were restricted to 'Socialist Parties which support the democratic constitution of the present German Republic and will pledge themselves to oppose all counter-revolutionary attempts'.¹³³⁾ The restriction to 'Socialist Parties' led to protests from non-socialist parties,

¹²⁹⁾ Police report, Gelsenkirchen, 9 April 1919: SAM I PA/342.

¹³⁰⁾ See the letter of complaint by the Bürgerverein, Ickern, to the Landrat for Dortmund County, 31 January 1919: also report by the Amtmann, Mengede, 10 April 1919: SAM I PA/342.

¹³¹⁾ Dortmund Workers' and Soldiers' Council to Landrat, Dortmund, 11 February 1919: SAM I PA/342.

¹³²⁾ Report by the Landrat, Dortmund, 10 March 1919: SAM I PA/342.

¹³³⁾ Report by the Police President, Bochum, 19 March 1919: SAM I PA/342.

especially from the Centre Party, which could claim working class support. The reply to the objections made it clear that the MSPD tactic was designed primarily to exclude the USPD and KPD since these were viewed by the Majority Socialist controlled workers' council of Bochum as 'opponents of the government and destroyers of the nations' economic life; as such they could no longer be represented in workers' councils'. ¹³⁴⁾ Similar motives were behind the restrictions imposed by the workers' and soldiers' council of Dortmund, which declared that the only persons who would be allowed to vote or be elected to the council were those belonging 'to socialist parties which expressly give a declaration that they support the constitution of the present German Republic, acknowledge the sovereignty of the National Assembly, and pledge themselves to oppose all counter-revolutionary movements'. ¹³⁵⁾

In the many towns in which new council elections were carried out in the spring of 1919, the results produced often ended the 'socialist' dominance of these bodies. The elections, based on a democratic electoral system, produced some striking results. In Hagen, for example, new elections produced a dramatic change in the composition of the workers' and soldiers' council in March 1919. Eligible to vote were all those who had reached the age of twenty and who did not receive an income of over 10,000 Marks per annum. ¹³⁶⁾ The results ended the jealously guarded monopoly enjoyed by the USPD in the old council. The largest vote was gained by a "Bourgeois Unity List", which secured 16 of the 36 'seats' in the new council. The USPD list managed to obtain 14 representatives, and that of the MSPD 4, the remaining 2 seats falling to a "Railway Employees Unity List". ¹³⁷⁾ Much of the radicalism and assertiveness of the old workers' and soldiers' council ended in consequence of this composition, and the new council was much more subservient to the authorities in the few months it existed.

¹³⁴⁾ Ibid..

¹³⁵⁾ Tremonia, 13 March 1919.

¹³⁶⁾ Freie Presse, 22 March 1919.

¹³⁷⁾ Lambers, op. cit., p.87.

Thus a variety of interrelated factors account for the progressive collapse of the council movement in Westphalia. Not least in importance, of course, were the developments on the national level, which were mirrored in the events which unfolded in the province. The attitude of the councils was fundamentally determined by the fact that they did not see themselves as counter-forces to the government, but as props of the Provisional Government. 138) The Majority Socialists continuously backed the government, especially after the resignation of the USPD ministers at the end of December 1918, when the Provisional Government was entirely in the hands of the MSPD. The position of the councils became more difficult after the withdrawal of the USPD from the government, for the MSPD line, determined by Ebert and his colleagues, was against the continuation of the councils. 139) In Westphalia the majority of the councils were in the hands of the MSPD, and thus little opposition developed to the government attitude. The councils were gradually pushed to the sidelines; the powers which they had assumed in the revolutionary period were whittled away by the resurgence of the local authorities backed by a central government. In Westphalia there was little reaction to the lowering of the status of the councils. On the contrary, there was a tacit acceptance of the subordinate role they increasingly played in the spring of 1919. At a conference of the workers' councils of southern Westphalia in June the opinion was voiced by many Majority Socialist delegates, who numerically dominated the meeting, that it was far more important to secure posts for party members in the higher administrative positions in town and rural government than to argue about the value of local workers' councils. As a concession to the supporters of the council principle it was emphasized that councils would continue to function in places where it was thought that they were necessary, at least until the local administration had been placed on a democratic basis. 140) At the time of the conference, numerous councils had

138) Matthias, op. cit., p.120.

139) Carsten, Revolution . . ., op. cit., p.140.

140) Westfälische Allgemeine Zeitung, 1 July 1919.

either disappeared or were in the process of dissolution. The idea of the council system survived, as the reaction to the Kapp Putsch was to show. A few councils did indeed survive to 1920, but they had ceased to be effective organisations by the summer of 1919. ¹⁴¹⁾

The fate of the councils in Westphalia, their decline and ultimate disappearance is not surprising, given the national developments. Within the Westphalian context, the weaknesses of the council system are adequately reflected. There was a lack of organisation, a lack of uniformity of objective; the majority of the councils pursued vague political aims. It was only on economic issues that unity of purpose remained constant, and here little was achieved. This unity of aim, with socialisation as the rallying point, survived the split in the working class ranks occasioned by conflicting attitudes about the political status and functions of the councils. The Majority Socialist controlled councils were only too ready to relinquish their power in favour of a parliamentary democracy, in line with the decision taken at the first National Congress of the workers' and soldiers' councils in December 1918.

Conclusion.

The introduction of political and constitutional changes was the main, one can almost say the sole, gain of the revolution. If one can criticise the Majority Socialist leaders on the national and regional level for failing through their own timidity to fulfil the hopes of the working class for economic and social reform, one cannot deny the profound consequences the introduction of a democratic political system had on Germany. What it meant in practice in Westphalia, as elsewhere where the working class had been on the sidelines of the political arena in the pre-war period, one can deduce from an observation made by the Landrat of Schwelm. Reporting on a clash between

¹⁴¹⁾ That some councils survived is clear from reports by local authorities made in 1920, such as the report from the Amt Langendreer, 26 April 1920: "Der frühere Arbeiterrat hat am 31 Januar 1920 seine Tätigkeit eingestellt, jedoch war er nicht völlig aufgelöst"; also report by the Landrat, Schwelm, 3 May 1920: "Bei dem hiesigen Landratsamt war seit der Revolution vom 9.11.1918 noch ein 3-gliedriger Kreisarbeiterrat tätig": SAM I PA/336.

middle class and working class elements in Gevelsberg in 1923 he noted that 'the deeper reason for the conflict lies in the strong differences between the bourgeoisie and the working class . . . These differences have become even more acute since the war through the appearance of an MSPD majority in the town parliament, resulting in the election of a worker, a Socialist trade union official Müller, to the position of mayor. The ruling circles of the town before the revolution have even now been unable to adjust to the change of things since 1918, and their indignation and resistance are directed especially against the town's chief official as the most visible and significant sign of the change.' 142)

Beyond the realisation of a parliamentary system of government based on an equal and direct franchise, for which the Social Democrats had been agitating for decades before the war, the revolution achieved little in fulfilling the wider aims of 'democratisation' in the administrative, military and economic spheres. 143) The officialdom of Wilhelminian Germany remained intact in Westphalia and with it the conservative spirit which it embodied. One sign of this can be seen in the fact that many Landräte and police authorities continued to use the 'royal' prefix until well into 1919. The power of the bureaucracy prevented any local council from removing obnoxious officials. A similar situation existed in the case of the army. The arbitrary interventions of Freiherr von Watter of the Seventh Army Command in the organisation of the soldiers' councils remained unchecked. Despite the awareness by the Majority Socialists of the reactionary nature of the army, and especially the Free Corps formations, there is evidence of at least one workers' and soldiers' council, that of Herford, actively engaging in the recruitment of volunteers for the Free Corps long after it had become clear that they had an internal

142) Report by the Landrat, Schwelm, 5 March 1923: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 6086.

143) Carsten, Revolution . . . , op. cit., pp.326 ff..

function antipathetic to the interests of the working class.¹⁴⁴⁾ The government, for the purposes of establishing 'law and order', was forced to use these forces against many of its own supporters during the strike movements in the Ruhr in the first half of 1919. That was damaging enough in the eyes of many socialists, but more galling still for them was the freedom given to the military; this led to a situation such as existed in Hagen, where the commander of the Free Corps "Lichtschlag" was able to forbid the May Day celebrations in 1919 - the first since the revolution!¹⁴⁵⁾ The consequence of such developments was further loss of support by the MSPD.

The growth of the USPD and the KPD in Westphalia occurred in the course of 1919 and 1920. It came too late in the case of the USPD to influence the course of events, for in the first few months following the revolution the MSPD was able to retain its dominant role as the vehicle for working class interests. This position reflected the strength of its highly organised bureaucratic party structure, and especially its large local organisations in the industrial areas of Westphalia.¹⁴⁶⁾ The traditional SPD strongholds survived the crisis occasioned by SPD support for the war, and the party emerged basically intact; the dissidents organised in the USPD were relatively few in number by the time of the elections to the National Assembly in January 1919.¹⁴⁷⁾ The result of the election in the electoral district of Arnsberg

¹⁴⁴⁾ See the pamphlet issued by the MSPD "Bergleute des Ruhrgebiets", 18 February 1919: "Wir wissen dass viele Offiziere und Soldaten der Freiwilligenkorps keine Kämpfer für die Revolution sind . . . dass viele Offiziere Leute alten Schlages sind"; full text in Spethmann, op. cit., pp.382-383. For the attitude of the Westphalian worker towards the Reichswehr see G. Colm, Beitrag zur Geschichte und Soziologie des Ruhr-aufstandes, Essen, 1921, pp.13-14.

¹⁴⁵⁾ Lambers, op. cit., p.91.

¹⁴⁶⁾ That the SPD was well organised and able to find considerable support one can deduce from the membership of some of the local party organisations (membership figures for mid-1914): Dortmund-Hörde - 18,544; Recklinghausen - 3,225; Bochum - 7,083; Hagen - 3,335; Hamm - 2,056. Figures from R. Lützenkirchen, op. cit., p.136.

¹⁴⁷⁾ In Dortmund, the SPD organisation was hardly affected by the split. The USPD could only attract a small number of party functionaries by the time of the January elections. The KPD made hardly any impact at this stage; see H. Graf, Die Entwicklung der Wahlen und politischen Parteien in Gross-Dortmund, Frankfurt, 1958, p.29. In southern Westphalia the USPD was only of significance in Hagen; Lambers, op. cit., pp.66-67.

(which became electoral district 18: Westphalia-South) reflects the strength and unity of the MSPD, which polled 40.6 per cent (Reich average 37.9 per cent) as against the 4.7 per cent of the USPD (Reich average 7.6 per cent). Support for the Majority Socialists on such a scale accounts for their dominance in the council movement. Support for the radicals who wanted to take the revolution further grew subsequently, following the deep disappointment of the working masses at the inability of the MSPD to protect their economic interests through socialisation. The frustration of the MSPD supporters with the policy of their party benefited in the first instance the USPD, which grew rapidly in the spring of 1919.¹⁴⁸⁾ The growth of radicalism came too late to influence the revolution in Westphalia. The fate of the main revolutionary organ, the councils, had already been decided.

¹⁴⁸⁾ A report by the Seventh Army Command, Münster, 12 June 1919, noted that the USPD membership was especially strong in the towns of Bochum and Hattingen. In the Bochum-Gelsenkirchen-Wattenscheid-Witten-Hattingen area the USPD membership was estimated at around 9,000: SAD MI IP/563.

Chapter 3. POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN WESTPHALIA, 1918 TO 1928.

Major Political Trends.

The revolution of 1918 left a profound imprint on the minds of the Westphalian population. It conditioned, to a significant degree, the actions of both the Left and the Right in the nineteen-twenties. Their reactions to the revolution were radically different. As far as the Left, especially the radical Left, was concerned it was the failure of the fulfilment of the ideas which fired the minds of the people in the revolutionary period of 1918 which gave rise to increasing frustration and greater radicalism. For the Right the revolution had been a traumatic experience unlikely to be forgotten. The emergence of working class political power was to be a permanent reminder to the upper and middle classes that their pre-1918 political supremacy had been eroded.

The political outlook of the population was shaped by the political traditions of the pre-1918 period which in turn were moulded by the sociological and religious composition of the region. The war and the revolution of 1918 initially hardly affected the party system in any fundamental sense, and the post-war parties, despite a number of name changes, retained the basic characteristics of the pre-war parties on which they were based. ¹⁾ In Westphalia the social and religious structure of the population continued to determine the strength of the two dominant political forces of the province, the SPD and the Centre Party. In the 1912 election the two parties had secured 62.8 per cent of the Westphalian vote. ²⁾ In the first post-war election their combined total increased to 71.1 per cent. ³⁾

Most striking if one compares the Westphalian results returned in the

1) Cf. S. Neumann, Die Parteien der Weimarer Republik, Stuttgart, 1970, (2nd ed.) p.27.

2) The Centre secured 34.0 per cent and the SPD 28.8 per cent; Bertram, op. cit., p.207.

3) Centre Party: 35.2 per cent; SPD: 35.9 per cent: Milatz, op. cit., p.36.

election to the National Assembly and the four Reichstag elections in the nineteen-twenties is the relative constancy of the votes polled by the socialist parties, the bourgeois parties and the Centre Party:

		1919	1920	1924(i)	1924(ii)	1928
Socialist Parties (SPD, USPD, KPD)	Westph.-N	32.7'	31.4	27.5''	28.3	33.3
	Westph.-S	46.4'	42.0	38.0''	36.8	41.4
	Reich	45.5'	41.6	33.1''	35.0	40.4
Bourgeois Parties (DDP, DVP, DNVP)	Westph.-N	25.1	27.2	27.8	29.4	20.0
	Westph.-S	25.3	27.3	28.6	30.7	23.5
	Reich	33.3	36.1	34.4	36.9	27.8
Centre	Westph.-N	42.1	39.6	35.8	38.1	31.5
	Westph.-S	28.3	28.0	26.0	27.3	23.3
	Reich	19.7'''	13.6	13.4	13.6	12.1
Others	Westph.-N	0.1	1.8	8.9	4.2	15.2
	Westph.-S	-	2.7	7.4	5.2	11.8
	Reich	1.5	8.7	19.1	14.5	19.7

' excluding KPD

'' excluding USPD from 1924(i)

''' excluding BVP

4)

The results of the combined returns for the socialist and bourgeois parties hide important realignments which took place between the 1919 and 1924 elections. The major shifts occurred within the socialist block with the rise of radical alternatives, initially that provided by the USPD, then that of the KPD. The reorientation was in line with the national developments, though it was much more drastic in the strongly industrialised electoral district of Westphalia-South:

	1919			1920			1924(i)			1924(ii)		
	W-N	W-S	Reich	W-N	W-S	Reich	W-N	W-S	Reich	W-N	W-S	Reich
SPD	30.6	41.3	37.9	21.6	20.8	21.6	17.8	16.1	20.5	21.9	24.7	26.0
USPD	2.1	5.1	7.6	8.0	19.7	17.9	--	--	--	--	--	--
KPD	--	--	--	1.5	1.5	2.1	9.7	21.9	12.6	6.4	12.1	9.0

Within the bourgeois block changes occurred in the degree of support enjoyed by the anti-Republican forces of the Right, which were more muted

4) The regional returns are taken from Milatz, op. cit., p.36 and pp.86 ff.; the 1920 regional returns were calculated from electoral returns given in HA 5A/539. National averages for the 1919-1928 period taken from H. Pross, Die Zerstörung der deutschen Politik. Dokumente 1871-1933, Frankfurt, 1959, p.352.

The same sources were used in all other tables given in this chapter.

than on the national level:

	1919			1920			1924(i)			1924(ii)		
	W-N	W-S	Reich	W-N	W-S	Reich	W-N	W-S	Reich	W-N	W-S	Reich
DNVP	8.7	15.3	10.3	10.0	6.0	13.9	14.7	12.3	19.5	16.2	12.6	20.5
DVP	6.6	—	4.4	12.5	16.3	13.9	9.5	11.8	9.2	9.7	12.1	10.1
DDP	9.8	10.0	18.6	4.7	5.0	8.3	3.6	4.5	5.7	3.5	6.0	6.3

The combined strength of the anti-Republican forces of the Left and Right was also lower than for Germany as a whole, though the regional and national trends were in line:

	Westph.-N	Westph.-S	Reich
Nat. Assembly	17.4	20.4	22.3
1920	32.0	43.4	47.8
1924(i)	27.9	35.7	38.6
1924(ii)	23.9	25.8	32.5 5)

The broad similarities between the national and regional trends were caused by diverse factors. 6) The first years of the republic were bleak and uncertain. The adjustments required by the defeat in war, the economic difficulties created by the adjustment of a wartime economy to the requirements of peace, and the hostility of much of post-war Europe to the new state gave rise to an increasing radicalism in the body politic. Within the Left embitterment at the failure of the new socialist-led government to realise the aspirations of wide sections of the working class gave rise to growing antagonism towards the democratic system. The left-wing putsches which punctuated the 1919 to 1923 period, were put down with brutal force by governments in which the SPD was represented, a situation which alienated many socialist supporters and moved them further to the Left. The periodic outbreaks of working class unrest in turn frightened the middle class, which was still recovering from the experiences of the revolution of 1918. The Peace of

5) The support given to the völkisch-National Socialist movement is included in the calculations for the two 1924 elections.

6) On the general pattern of developments see H. Heiber, Die Republik von Weimar, Munich, 1966. For an analysis of the factors influencing the Reichstag elections of 1920 and 1924 see Milatz, op. cit., pp.114-118; also S.L.W. Mellen, 'The German People and the Postwar World. A Study based on Election Statistics, 1871-1933', The American Political Science Review, 37, 1943, pp.614-618.

Versailles, with its war-guilt clause and reparation demands, and the injustice felt by many Germans at the way in which the new state was dealt with by the victorious powers provided ample propaganda material for the nationalist, revanchist right-wing forces. Economic factors such as food rationing, a housing shortage and rising prices, affected wide sections of the population. With the acceleration of inflation in 1922, and the total collapse of the currency in 1923, the chaotic economic situation gave rise to intense struggles between employer and employee, between the government and the individual. Life lost all meaning to the rising army of unemployed and to sections of the middle class proletarianised by the inflation. In their exasperation sizeable elements of the population responded to the appeal of radical movements on the left and right of the political spectrum.

Westphalian politics were influenced not only by the general national situation, but by two specifically regional events which had a profound impact on the voting habits of the province: the Ruhr uprising of March 1920 and the occupation of part of the province by French and Belgian troops in January 1923. Both these events exacerbated the regional difficulties, intensified the economic problems, and undermined the democratic aggregation returned in the 1919 poll for the National Assembly. The outbreak of left-wing putschism in March 1920 was occasioned by a strong reaction by the working masses to the creation of the reactionary Kapp régime on 13 March. ⁷⁾ In Westphalia the news of the right-wing putsch resulted in a spontaneous mobilisation of the working class in conjunction with, and sometimes independently of, the regional socialist parties and the trade union movement. The reaction, designed to demonstrate support for the Bauer government and to bring down the Kapp régime, took a

7) For the background and history of the putsch see the detailed work by J. Erger, Der Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik 1919/20, Düsseldorf, 1967.

variety of forms. 8) The chief weapon used was the industrial one, the proclamation of a general strike. This was actively supported not only by the industrial workers, but also white-collar workers and civil servants. 9) The anti-Kapp front in Westphalia brought together a wide spectrum of opinion which reached from the Communists and Syndicalists to the DDP, the Christian trade unions and part of the Centre Party. 10) Local action committees and revived workers' councils were formed which hastened to prepare a defence against any reactionary forces which might raise their heads in the province.

The first action of the newly formed workers' councils and action committees was to prevent the publication of any proclamations of the 'Kapp government', an objective achieved in many towns by subjecting newspapers to censorship. 11) The socialist parties, whatever their political differences, were determined to counter the Kapp putsch with an active resistance if necessary. This was made clear from the start as is evidenced by the creation of workers' militia, a development set in motion simultaneously with the proclamation of the general strike. 12) The suspicion that Reichswehr detachments stationed on the fringe of the inner Ruhr were on the side of the Kapp régime led to the disarming of some units by the workers' militia. In Kamen the detachment von Manstein was disarmed 'in the first days of the Kapp régime' and the officers 'locked up to protect them from the fury of the mob'. 13) A similar fate befell many of the predominantly middle class Einwohnerwehren

- 8) The Westphalian reaction to the Kapp Putsch and the ensuing revolutionary situation have been analysed by Colm, op. cit., pp.25 ff.; cf. G. Eliasberg, Der Ruhrkrieg von 1920, Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1974, pp.69 ff.; E. Lucas, Märzrevolution im Ruhrgebiet. Vom Generalstreik gegen den Militärputsch zum bewaffneten Arbeiteraufstand, März-April 1920, Band I, Frankfurt, 1970, pp.119 ff.. For the situation in Hagen see Lambers, op. cit., pp.97 ff..
- 9) Colm, op. cit., p.25; also Volkswacht, (Bielefeld edit.), 16 March 1920.
- 10) Eliasberg, op. cit., p.69.
- 11) Cf. 'Bekanntmachung', Arbeiterrat, Minden, 15 March 1920. Copy in SAD MI IP/579.
- 12) Colm, op. cit., pp.27 ff.; Lambers, op. cit., p.99; see also reports by Landrat, Altena, 29 April 1920; Amtmann, Amt Hordel, Bochum, 27 April 1920; Amtmann, Amt Bochum-Süd, Altenbochum, 27 April 1920; SAM I PA/336.
- 13) Police report, Unna, 20 April 1920: SAM I PA/366; Lucas, op. cit., pp.178-179.

which were thought to be pro-Kapp in their outlook. 14)

The suspicion of the workers and their leaders that the Reichswehr units stationed in the province were on the side of Kapp was not unfounded. The response of units stationed in Remscheid, Osnabrück, Bielefeld and Mülheim heightened the belief that the Reichswehr in the region supported Kapp. 15) Fears were intensified by the ambiguous attitude adopted by the commander of Wehrkreis VI, General von Watter. Though he did not declare his support for Kapp, he refused on 16 March to give an oath of loyalty to the Bauer government when urged to do so by the Westphalian Reichskommissar Severing. 16) Von Watter's determination to re-establish 'law and order', to move against 'disturbances created by left-wing radicals', was seen as provocation by the supporters of the legitimate government. 17) The appearance of parts of the Freecorps "Lichtschlag" in Wetter on 15 March turned the latent hostility between workers and military into open conflict. Fierce fighting broke out between the freecorps and workers' militia, which hurried to the scene from all parts of central Westphalia. 18) The successful action of the workers against these forces, and repeat performances against further sections of the same freecorps at Herdecke and Dortmund, strengthened the workers physically and psychologically. The acquisition of new military equipment taken from the freecorps, including heavy artillery, and the success against units of the professional army stimulated the workers' morale and improved their military capacity.

The collapse of the Kapp régime on 17 March realised the immediate objectives of the general strike. Conditions of normalcy did not return to the Ruhr. An appeal by the government for a return to work was ignored by the

14) Report by Kreisrat, Hamm, 22 April 1920; report by Oberbürgermeister, Hagen, 27 April 1920: SAM I PA/366. Further Lucas, op. cit., p.177.

15) Lucas, op. cit., pp.104-107.

16) Erger, op. cit., p.186; Eliasberg, pp.73 ff.; more critical Lucas, op. cit., pp.99 ff..

17) 'Bekanntmachung', Wehrkreiskommando VI, Münster, 15 March 1920: copy in SAM I PA/371.

18) Eliasberg, op. cit., pp.82 ff.; Lucas, op. cit., pp.163 ff..

majority of workers. 19) Already before the end of the Kapp putsch voices had been raised in Rhineland-Westphalia calling for the implementation of a radical political and social programme. The demands were reminiscent of those made in the revolutionary period of 1918. Although the three socialist parties were agreed in their common opposition to the 'reactionary forces' behind Kapp in the first days of the putsch, the USPD and KPD leaders used the chaotic and uncertain situation at the time to call for the 'creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat'. They stressed the need to secure 'the victory of socialism based on the council system' and the 'immediate nationalisation of those industrial sectors ripe for such action'. 20) These demands became more prominent following the success of the workers against the army. In those Ruhr towns which had a radical tradition, towns in which the USPD and the KPD set the tone, 'council republics' were proclaimed. 21) The struggle against Kapp was incidental to the greater objective of turning the republic into a socialist state; it thus turned into a proletarian uprising, the most extensive revolt Germany had seen since the peasant wars of the sixteenth century. 22) Within one week the formation of a workers' army, the so-called 'Red Army', secured military control of the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial region, forcing the Reichswehr to retreat from the area. 23) Attempts to end the confrontation between the government and the armed workers failed because of the suspicion with which both sides regarded each other. The Münster and Bielefeld agreements, attempts to meet the demands of the workers, could not be enforced. Within the Ruhr syndicalist and anarchist elements took the lead in the 'revolution'. Their excesses horrified even KPD and USPD leaders. In the end the socialist-led government was forced to use the Reichswehr to crush the rising

19) Eliasberg, op. cit., p.248.

20) Lucas, op. cit., p.127 and p.129.

21) This happened in Remscheid, Gelsenkirchen, Duisburg, Mülheim, Hamborn and Essen; Lambers, op. cit., p.109.

22) Eliasberg, op. cit., p.259.

23) On the 'Red Army' see Eliasberg, op. cit., p.103; on the retreat of what remained of the Reichswehr in the Ruhr see Colm, op. cit., pp.41 ff.; and Lucas, op. cit., pp.294 ff..

and re-establish authority. However reluctantly this decision was taken, it was ultimately the only alternative open to the government if the authority of the state was to remain intact.

The day to day developments of the conflict are of secondary importance for the purposes of this analysis. ²⁴⁾ Of greater significance are the political consequences, especially the impact of the affair on Westphalia. For the regional SPD the whole episode was a disaster. The association of the socialist-led government with the reactionary Reichswehr drove many SPD supporters into the ranks of parties further to the left, primarily the USPD. ²⁵⁾ The gulf between the left-wing parties, already present before the uprising, widened during the conflict. Many workers were also alienated from the SPD due to the lack of progress on the question of social reform. The call for the socialisation of the iron, steel and coal industries, with which the USPD and KPD were closely associated, had been a bone of contention in the province since November 1918. Frustration created by the lack of progress on this issue rallied sizeable elements behind the 'Red Army'. The opinions of many workers remained constant on this matter, and were strengthened, rather than weakened, by the crushing of the Ruhr revolt. Politically, this aided the USPD, as seen in its tremendous advance in the Reichstag election of 1920.

If the 'Ruhr war' of 1920 radicalised the working class, the occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923 stimulated the conservative, nationalist cause. The occupation affected a considerable portion of western Westphalia's industrial zone. Bounded by the river Lippe in the north, the occupied zone extended to the line Lünen-Schwerte in the east and ran north of Hagen to Hattingen in the south. ²⁶⁾ The occupation underlined Germany's political

24) For a detailed account see Colm, op. cit., pp.135 ff.; Eliasberg, op. cit., pp.163 ff..

25) Eliasberg, op. cit., pp.253 ff..

26) On the occupation of the Ruhr and its impact on Westphalia see K. Pabst, 'Der Ruhrkampf', in W. Först, (ed.), Zwischen Ruhrkampf und Wiederaufbau, Cologne, 1972, pp.11-50; also Lambers, op. cit., pp.168 ff..

and military weakness and heightened nationalist feelings throughout the republic. Intense hatred of the French was whipped up especially by the DNVP and völkisch-National Socialist groups active in the region. Their association with the hard-line taken against the occupation furthered their cause.²⁷⁾ The presence of the French and Belgians made the population much more receptive to crude nationalist and revanchist sentiments. The intensity of these feelings can be gauged from the fact that even the Westphalian KPD found it prudent to drop its attack on 'nationalism' and to emphasize newly acquired 'nationalist' sentiments to prevent the masses from drifting towards the nationalist camp'.²⁸⁾ It was the extreme Left and Right which superimposed an active resistance on the passive resistance advocated by the government. Terrorist actions, strikes and demonstrations were met by harsh reprisals by the occupying powers which intensified the hostility of the population. The government's proclamation of the end of passive resistance on 26 September 1923 provided more fuel for the rightists. The occupation did much to foster the strength of the DNVP in Westphalia as well as helping the nascent National Socialist movement to extend the precarious foothold it had acquired in the pre-1923 period.

Viewed overall, the years 1919 to 1924 saw fundamental changes in the political inclinations of the Westphalian population. This is seen most clearly in the rise of a radical Left and Right. The changes were as profound as those which were to take place in the latter years of the republic's existence. The only party relatively immune from the impact of the political and economic turmoil of these years was the Centre Party, which was also to prove itself the most stable political movement in the republic in the post-1929 period. For the democratic cause the early years of the Weimar Republic were

27) Pabst, in Fürst, op. cit., pp.24 ff.; Lambers, op. cit., p.169 and pp.182 ff.. Also "Lagebericht", Münster, 25 February 1923: SAM I PA/274.

28) "Lagebericht", Münster, 25 February 1923: SAM I PA/274.

a disaster exceeded only in magnitude by the radicalism of the early nineteen-thirties. The stability which marks the 1924 to 1929 period postponed the consequences of the rise of left- and right-wing radicalism until the new economic and political crisis reduced the democratic forces further. In the second phase of the growth of radicalism the effects of the 1918 to 1924 period were to play their part in bringing down a structure already in a precarious position.

The Economic Situation.

Throughout the period under review the economic situation of Westphalia was an unhealthy one, with erratic employment trends accompanied by periods of acute crisis. The problem of unemployment dominated the economic life of the province. It was accompanied in the immediate post-war years by serious food shortages in the urban centres to add to the misery of the population. Although the working class suffered most under these conditions, the effects of a depressed economy hit all sections of the community. The inflationary spiral of the post-war years, culminating in the collapse of the Mark in 1923, seriously undermined the vitality of the middle classes as well as affecting the bulk of the labour force which was thrown temporarily out of work.

The economic structure of Westphalia contributed to the numerous economic problems which emerged in the country as a whole. The major weakness was the mono-structure of much of Westphalian industry.²⁹⁾ In the Ruhr region the position was especially unfavourable due to the dominance of a few large-scale production branches in which the large factory unit dominated. The absence of a mixed economic structure in the Ruhr made the situation precarious since an unfavourable situation in one branch of the interdependent and highly integrated industrial complex affected most of the others. As the coal, iron and steel industries employed around 85 per cent of the labour force, the

29) For the following see the "Bericht des Landesarbeitsamtes Westfalen und Lippe", 1 April 1926-31 March 1927: WWA K2/181.

vitality of these industrial branches determined the employment situation of much of the population.

The employment situation in the post-war years was not a favourable one. This is true not only of Westphalia, but for Germany as a whole. If one takes the figure of 5 per cent unemployment as a boundary at which mass unemployment and a crisis position commences, then Germany enjoyed a non-crisis situation for only a very short time throughout the period 1918 to 1933. ³⁰⁾ Westphalian industry in the Weimar period lacked the boom conditions necessary for full employment. A variety of factors combined to depress the economy. In the first place, the dominance of the industrialists was undermined by the revolution of 1918. In the revolutionary period the discipline of the work force deteriorated as the workers felt free to assert themselves. This situation was much lamented by the employers, who were concerned with the loss of production occasioned by workers holding political meetings during factory hours regardless of management objections. ³¹⁾ Allied to such developments was the appearance of a 'lack of will to work', which cut the productivity of the labour force. In the case of the mining industry the loss amounted to 25 per cent. ³²⁾ The 'will to work' was further reduced by the food shortages and the poor diet of the post-war period. ³³⁾ Large-scale dislocation was also produced by the numerous, often widespread and prolonged, strikes which marred production in the post-war years. The frustration of the workers, especially of the miners, at the lack of progress on nationalisation and social improvement, produced bitter disputes in both 1919 and 1920. The miners' strikes, and the strike by the railway employees in 1922, were the most serious, and dislocated

30) Unemployment under 5 per cent occurred in the relatively short periods from April 1924 to October 1925 (19 months) and July to October 1927 (4 months) - W. Conze & W. Raupach (eds.), Die Staats- und Wirtschaftskrise des deutschen Reiches 1929/33, Stuttgart, 1967, pp.38 ff..

31) Cf. Report by A. Brecht & Co., Stahlblechwalzwerk, Witten a.d. Ruhr to Nordwestliche Gruppe des Vereins dt. Eisen und Stahlindustrieller Düsseldorf, 5 February 1919: WNA K2/667.

32) Report by Bochum IHK, 13 January 1919: WNA K2/806.

33) Report by Bochum IHK, 1 November 1919: WNA K2/806.

industry in general. Large numbers were laid off due to fuel shortages, lack of power and raw materials. ³⁴⁾ The political restlessness of the period was another factor contributing to the economic dislocation. The sporadic outbreaks of left-wing radicalism in 1919, followed by the Ruhr conflict of 1920 paralysed industrial life. Further problems emerged with the occupation in 1923, which cut the Westphalian economy in half and led to high unemployment in a number of towns dependent on the supplies of factories situated in the occupied zone. ³⁵⁾

There were also the effects of the inflation, which became most disruptive in the months before the total monetary collapse in November 1923. The problem of rapid price rises had made itself noticeable long before 1923. As early as 1919 a number of strikes had been occasioned by various occupational groups trying to secure wage and salary adjustments to keep in step with inflation. In the winter of 1919/1920 railway workers, bank employees, catering personnel, post office and telephone workers all resorted to the strike weapon. The lag of incomes behind prices led to militancy in professional groups to whom such an act as striking was normally anathema. In March 1920 doctors threatened to strike and forced a higher rate of income out of the authorities by dealing with insurance scheme patients only under the 'private' category. ³⁶⁾ 'Food riots' were another ever present danger to public order as frustration and anxiety led the unemployed and underemployed to take the law into their own hands. In June 1919 the Bielefeld city market was taken over by a mob which forced the sale of foodstuffs at half-price. A similar fate befell the food-stores in the town centre. ³⁷⁾ Order was only restored after the Freecorps "Gabcke" was sent into the city by the authorities. ³⁸⁾ Similar unrest affected

³⁴⁾ See the numerous reports by the Bochum IHK for 1919: WWA K2/806. On the effects of the railway strike of 1922 see especially the report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 16 February 1922: SAD MI IP/621.

³⁵⁾ Cf. Lambers, op. cit., pp.173 ff..

³⁶⁾ Ibid., pp.94-95.

³⁷⁾ Westfälische Zeitung, 30 June and 1 July 1919.

³⁸⁾ Report by Oberbürgermeister, Bielefeld, 3 July 1919: SAD MI IP/577.

Bad Oeynhausen and Paderborn, where the Bielefeld example influenced identical outbreaks. 39)

The situation of the population became progressively worse between 1920 and 1922. By the end of 1922 the 'pressure of the poor economic situation created a very bitter feeling especially among the poorer elements of the population'. 40) The problem of high prices of basic necessities affected not only the working class but also white-collar workers and civil servants, while those living on fixed incomes were finding life impossible. 41) Even before the catastrophic collapse of the Mark in 1923 a large part of the population was no longer able to buy certain foodstuffs, especially dairy produce. 42) The decline in the standard of living accelerated following the Ruhr occupation. The real income of those still employed by April 1923 had fallen to 50 per cent of its pre-war value, despite significant increases in wages and salaries. The cost of the passive resistance, in the shape of the Ruhrhilfe, placed an additional burden on the state's financial resources at a time when the German economy was disrupted by the loss of its most productive sector. By the beginning of 1923 the Mark had already lost 2,500 per cent of its value since 1918. In 1923 inflation reduced its value further, to stand at an all-time low of 0.0005 Pfennigs in November 1923. 43)

The collapse of the currency affected all sectors of society. For the working class the most damaging result was the loss of employment. In part this was due to the deterioration of the export trade. German industry found it impossible to buy the necessary raw materials as these could only be secured through foreign exchange, suppliers refusing to accept the increasingly worthless Mark. In Westphalia unemployment, albeit short-term, reached heights in

39) Police report, Bad Oeynhausen, 6 July 1919: SAD MI IP/580; police report, Paderborn, 15 July 1919: SAD MI IP/581; also Westfälisches Volksblatt, 6 July 1919.

40) Report by Oberpräsident, Münster, 21 December 1922: SAD MI IP/621.

41) Report by Landrat, Warendorf, 4 April 1922; report by Landrat, Ahaus, 9 November 1921; reports by the Oberbürgermeister, Buer, 8 October 1921 and 25 January 1922: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 3.

42) Police report, Recklinghausen, 24 November 1922: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 3.

43) Heiber, op. cit., pp.98 ff..

1923 which were not to be surpassed even in the gloomiest period of the depression of the post-1929 period. By November 1923 Dortmund alone registered 220,000 unemployed out of a total work force of 279,000. Similar figures can be cited for a number of other Ruhr towns. ⁴⁴⁾ The distress this situation created needs no elaboration. ⁴⁵⁾ Drastic too were the short and long term effects of the inflation on the middle class. Although inflation did not hit all middle class elements with equal severity (some segments indeed benefited), the experience for most was traumatic. ⁴⁶⁾ The retail and service sectors were hard hit. These had been suffering long before the monetary chaos of 1923. The erratic and uncertain employment situation in the post-war period had undermined the position of the retail and service industries due to the lack of purchasing power of wide sections of the population. ⁴⁷⁾ The enforced economies made by many consumers as prices rose threatened many businesses with bankruptcy. Small retailers, with a declining turn-over, found it difficult to replenish their stock, a situation which in turn led to a crisis in the wholesale trade. ⁴⁸⁾

For those living on a fixed income or dependent on savings and pensions the inflation was a nightmare as prices shot up to ludicrous levels. Many people lost their savings and means of support. The stabilisation of the currency heralded by the introduction of the Rentenmark made the losses permanent. The whole affair left a deep scar on the minds of those affected. The impoverishment, indeed the proletarianisation, of some elements of the middle class fed right-wing radicalism, not only at the time but also during the years of the depression, when fears of a repetition of the 1923 inflation were

44) "Lagemeldung", Münster, 1 November 1923; 15 and 24 November 1923: SAM I PA/276.

45) Cf. Lambers, op. cit., pp.178 ff..

46) H. Lebovics, Social Conservatism and the Middle Classes in Germany 1914-1933, Princeton, 1969, p.20; H.A. Winkler, Mittelstand, Demokratie und Nationalsozialismus. Die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und von Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republik, Cologne, 1972, pp.28-29; also T.A. Ross, 'The Passing of the German Middle Class', The American Journal of Sociology, 29, 1924.

47) Report by Regierungspräsident, Münster, 5 August 1921; report by the Oberbürgermeister, Buer, 8 July 1921: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 2.

48) Police report, Hagen, 22 July 1922: SAM I PA/398.

to influence the political judgement of many members of the middle class.

The stabilisation of the Mark was not a miraculous cure for Germany's economic ills. It was followed by a deflationary period in which stability was secured primarily at the expense of the working class. The eight-hour day, one of the chief gains of the November revolution, disappeared in practice in many sectors of the economy. Labour organisations were powerless to prevent a reduction in the wage rates which accompanied the extension of the working day. ⁴⁹⁾ Capital scarcity and high rates of interest plus an increase in taxation led many industrialists to adopt rationalisation programmes which produced a permanent pool of unemployed labour. ⁵⁰⁾ This affected all sectors of Westphalian industry, though the largest losses in the number of work-places occurred in the mining and metal processing industries. ⁵¹⁾ The coal industry bore the brunt of the contraction. Between January 1923 and July 1925 105,766 workers (19.5 per cent of the total Westphalian work-force) became redundant in the Ruhr region. In the Bochum district alone some 22.6 per cent of the miners were displaced in this period. ⁵²⁾ Communities dependent on one industrial sector were often in dire straits due to underemployment or lack of employment. In Witten, which was heavily dependent on the iron and steel industry, only 50 per cent of those employed in 1925 still had their jobs in 1926. A recession in the winter of 1925/26 forced the wholesale closure of factories. ⁵³⁾ In Dortmund one mine alone dispensed with 80 per cent of its

49) Heiber, op. cit., p.155; also Lambers, op. cit., p.171 and p.198.

50) See the report by the IHKn. Südwestfälisches Industriebezirks (IHKn. of Arnsberg, Altena, Iserlohn, Lüdenscheid, Siegen and Hagen), Hagen, 31 July 1925: WWA K2/806.

51) Numerous reports of contraction of labour force in WWA K2/181. In the Hagen region the number working in the metal industry contracted from 42,500 in 1920 to 15,299 by 1931 - H. Hildenbrand, Die strukturelle Entwicklung von Wirtschaft und Bevölkerung im Stadtkreis Hagen, 1945-1967, Hagen, (n.d.), p.30.

52) "Statistische Zusammenstellung über den Ruhrbergbau", Bochum, 27 July 1925: WWA K2/1010.

53) "Verwaltungsbericht 1925", Stadt Witten, 6 August 1926: WWA K2/181.

labour force within the space of eight months. 54) Insecurity and fear of unemployment haunted many communities with, as one contemporary report noted, 'widespread distress affecting all sections of the population, whose position can only be termed catastrophic'. 55) For much of 1926 the rate of unemployment in Westphalia stood ten per cent higher than the Reich average; this despite the 40 per cent reduction in the total number of unemployed between January and December. 56) A feature of increasing concern to the authorities was the emergence of a significant number of long-term unemployed in 1925-1926. 57)

In general the situation of the bulk of the working population remained an unenviable one even in the post-1925 period during which the economy benefited from the greater internal stability and an improved external position. The influx of foreign, primarily American, capital into Germany bolstered an economy under considerable strain due to the reparation payments. But even in these years of superficial prosperity the low wages received by those who escaped redundancy and lay-offs or seasonal unemployment were barely sufficient to meet the high cost of living. 58) The difference of income between the wage earner and welfare payments for the unemployed was so low that workers complained of being better off unemployed. 59) The low purchasing power of the population inevitably affected other economic activity, in particular the service industry and the retail trade. The uncertainty and discontent in these economic sectors was generated by the threat of bankruptcy which loomed

54) Police report, Dortmund, 31 March 1926: SAM I PA/279.

55) Report by Landrat, Altena, 26 March 1926: SAM I PA/279.

56) "Bericht des Landesarbeitsamtes Westfalen und Lippe", 1 April 1926 to 31 March 1927: WWA K2/181.

57) "Bericht über die Lage des Arbeitsmarktes in Westf./Lippe", 2 January 1925: WWA K2/806; also report by Landrat, Siegen, 8 April 1926: SAM I PA/279.

58) See the reports by the Landrat, Arnsberg, 26 February and 30 March 1925: SAM I PA/281.

59) Police report, Hagen, 28 February 1925: SAM I PA/281.

permanently over numerous businesses. ⁶⁰⁾ The employment opportunities in commerce and business in general were also very limited due to a surplus of labour. Older office employees, often displaced by the rationalisation which affected salaried staff as much as wage labour, found it virtually impossible to secure a new position. ⁶¹⁾

The depressed economic position during the nineteen-twenties created much discontent which was exploited by political movements. The position of the bulk of the working class made it easier for the KPD to attract SPD supporters. The threat of redundancy and unemployment which hovered over white-collar workers led to disenchantment and resentment which was reflected in the emergence of sectional interest parties and a drift towards right-wing forces hostile to the republic. The experience of wage and salary labour in the decade 1918 to 1928 was not calculated to further stability and moderation when the depression set in in the 1928/29 period. The depression made the electorate more volatile and radicalism, left and right-wing, became even more attractive than it had been in the early nineteen-twenties.

The Left-wing Parties.

(i) The SPD.

For the SPD the post-1918 period was one of painful adjustment. The initial success of, and the opportunities open to, the SPD in 1918/1919 had slipped away by 1920, and for much of the nineteen-twenties the party was on the defensive, fending off attacks from the right and centre, and even more vicious assaults from the radical Left. During the crucial years of the immediate post-war period the SPD lost ground to movements further to the left. Some of the losses sustained by the party in these years were to prove permanent. Even in the mid-nineteen-twenties, which saw a revival of the fortunes of the SPD in a period of greater economic and political stability, the party failed to regain all the ground it had lost before 1923.

⁶⁰⁾ Police report, Recklinghausen, 5 December 1925: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 4; report by Landrat, Lippstadt, 3 October 1925; report by Landrat, Altena, 23 October 1925: SAM I PA/281.

⁶¹⁾ Police report, Hamm, 3 January 1925: SAM I PA/281.

The fortunes of the SPD in Westphalia parallel the national pattern, though in the highly industrialised electoral district of Westphalia-South the slump in the party's fortunes between the election to the National Assembly in 1919 and the first Reichstag election of 1924 was much more dramatic:

	1919	1920	1924(i)	1924(ii)	1928
Westphalia-North	30.6	21.6	17.8	21.9	24.4
Westphalia-South	41.3	20.8	16.1	24.7	29.5
Reich	37.9	21.6	20.5	26.0	29.8

The decline in the SPD's position was the consequence of the schisms which developed in the socialist movement. The emergence of the USPD in 1917, a break-away socialist movement advocating a mixture of pacifist and revolutionary ideas, began to sap the strength of the Westphalian SPD in the post-1918 period. At the time of the split in 1917 the SPD was able to retain control over virtually the whole of the party membership, party apparatus and the regional party press in Westphalia, which was traditionally more moderate in its politics than the western Ruhr where the USPD made significant gains. ⁶²⁾ Only in the Hagen-Schwelm and Lennep areas did the majority of SPD branches join the newly formed USPD in the course of 1917. Losses were also sustained by the SPD in the Altena-Iserlohn districts, where the bulk of the party membership joined the Independent Socialists. ⁶³⁾ However, the SPD retained control over its elaborate regional organisation and continued to enjoy the allegiance of a large part of the working class. During the revolutionary period the SPD managed to remain the revolutionary socialist movement in the eyes of the bulk of the Westphalian proletariat and was able to secure the electoral success of January 1919. It was in the course of 1919 that the position of the party was destroyed.

The leading role played by the SPD in the first Weimar coalition government associated the party with the use of 'reactionary' Reichswehr and

62) Lucas, op. cit., p.31.

63) Lademacher, in Först, op. cit., p.90; Lambers, op. cit., pp.24-25.

freecorps troops against the working class. In consequence the SPD lost numerous party members to the USPD, which was able to project itself as a truly socialist party. In many of the smaller Westphalian towns complete local SPD organisations joined the new force of the Left. ⁶⁴⁾ Another failure of the SPD in the eyes of many working men was the party's unwillingness to pursue a policy of nationalisation. This damaged the reputation of the SPD in the Ruhr industrial towns, where the nationalisation of the mining, iron and steel industries was desired by the majority of the population. The USPD made much capital out of the SPD's 'conservatism', and the accusation of the SPD's 'betrayal of the working class' had its effect. ⁶⁵⁾ The experience of the working class during the Ruhr uprising in 1920 reinforced the drift to the radical Left and seriously weakened the SPD in those parts of the province directly affected by the uprising. ⁶⁶⁾ A regional analysis of the returns of the SPD and USPD in the Reichstag election of June 1920 shows that the SPD was able to retain its support and keep the USPD at bay only in the Regierungsbezirk of Minden. Here the two parties polled 28.9 per cent and 5.3 per cent respectively. ⁶⁷⁾ In the Ruhr region of the Regierungsbezirke of Münster and Arnsberg, centre of the unrest, the SPD lost heavily and the USPD secured almost parity in electoral support, the parties polling 13.0 per cent and 10.3 per cent and 20.8 per cent and 19.7 per cent respectively. In many Ruhr towns the SPD's losses were catastrophic. In Dortmund the party lost 26.9 per cent of its support between 1919 and 1920, while the USPD advanced from a mere 3.3 per cent in 1919 to 28.6 per cent by 1920. ⁶⁸⁾ In Hagen the vote for the SPD declined from 20.7 per cent in 1919 to 8.9 per cent in 1920. In Haspe the respective figures were 26.8 and 11.3 per cent. ⁶⁹⁾ In the three electoral units of Hagen, Ennepe-Ruhr and Dortmund the USPD

64) Lucas, op. cit., p.60.

65) Lambers, op. cit., p.65.

66) On the political consequences see Eliasberg, op. cit., pp.253 ff..

67) The percentages derived from statistics given in HA 5A/539.

68) Graf, op. cit., p.187.

69) Lambers. op. cit., p.69 and p.134.

replaced the SPD as the dominant party. 70)

The SPD was never able to recover all the losses sustained between 1919 and 1920. The sober Realpolitik of the party leadership in the nineteen-twenties failed to attract new support, especially among working class youth, the mood of whom was much more in tune with the 'barricade-romanticism' of the KPD. 71) In the eyes of the electorate as a whole the party became closely associated with the republic, improved its position in periods of stability and lost ground during times of distress. 72) The SPD's position was thus an unenviable one. The major challenge after the break up of the USPD came from the KPD which drew much of its following from former SPD supporters. The antagonism between these two parties became the chief feature of left-wing politics in the post-1920 period. In the late nineteen-twenties the conflict between the two sharpened with the onset of the depression and the adoption of the 'social fascist' theory by the KPD. The communist accusation that the SPD suffered from 'Verbonzung, Verkalkung und Verbürgerlichung' (literally 'bossification, ossification and bourgeoisification') proved damaging to the party's efforts to retain its working class support because the disparaging description contained much truth. 73)

In Westphalia the KPD proved a dangerous rival to the SPD in the working class conurbations of the Ruhr. In many towns the SPD was relegated to a secondary position. The poverty and squalor, the high unemployment rate and concentration of unskilled labour in many Ruhr towns, worked against the SPD. In the industrial towns outside the Ruhr in which light and medium industry, employing skilled and semi-skilled labour predominated, the SPD fared much better and continued to thrive.

Contemporary SPD analysts were much concerned to find an explanation for the SPD's relatively weak performance in Westphalia. In an article in

70) Milatz, op. cit., Appendix, map 'Reichstagswahl 1920'.

71) Cf. R.N. Hunt, German Social Democracy, 1918-1933, London, 1964, pp.106-107.

72) On the SPD's general position see W. Tormin, Geschichte der deutschen Parteien seit 1848, Stuttgart, 1967, pp.168 ff.; also Hunt, op. cit., pp.106-107.

73) Hunt, op. cit., p.241.

Vorwärts in September 1928 Siensen wrote: 'The influence of Catholicism, the intermingling of large foreign elements within the working class and therefore a lack of unity, the rapid growth of industry hand in hand with the terror of the employers which hindered thorough propaganda and education (of the workers), finally the catastrophies of the Ruhr occupation, have so torn and undermined the Party that a half-way healthy and normal development will be held back for a long time yet.' 74) Siensen's analysis, accurate in broad terms, ignored one central factor which did so much to alienate SPD support: the party's failure to pursue a socialist policy. It was the failure of the SPD leaders to respond to working class demands which cost the party so heavily at election time and moved the workers first to the USPD, and then to the KPD. 75)

(ii) The USPD.

The USPD played a brief, though important, role in the political developments of Westphalia in the immediate post-war period. At the time of the November Revolution the party was still in its infancy and lacked sufficient support. The only centre of which the USPD influenced working class politics during the revolution was Hagen, where a sizeable movement had developed in 1917. 76) The party lacked the technical means to influence developments during the revolutionary phase: it had neither a regional press nor an effective party apparatus which could compete with the highly organised SPD. 77) These defects explain to a large degree the relatively poor performance of the party in Westphalia in the January election of 1919. In both Westphalia-North and Westphalia-South the USPD's returns of 2.1 per cent and 5.1 per cent respectively, lay below the national average of 7.6 per cent. The only creditable performance came in the Hagen region, where the energetic local party functionaries organised an efficient movement which was able to challenge the SPD. The returns of 20.3 per cent and 26.7 per cent secured in Hagen and Haspe

74) Quoted in K. Koszyk, Zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur. Die sozialdemokratische Presse von 1914 bis 1933, Heidelberg, 1958, p.198.

75) See the reports by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 27 September 1920: SAM VII - 2 Bd. I; and on 12 November 1920: SAM VII - 88.

76) Lambers, op. cit., pp.24-25.

77) Lucas, op. cit., pp.31-32.

were only marginally below those of the SPD (20.7 per cent and 26.8 per cent respectively).⁷⁸⁾ In other towns the USPD's vote lagged far behind that of the SPD.

The fortunes of the USPD changed dramatically in the course of 1919. In the first place the relatively weak party organisation was improved with the creation of a regional party structure, the organisational concepts of which were taken from the example provided by the SPD.⁷⁹⁾ The numerous party branches which emerged in 1919 were organised in two district units, one covering western, the other eastern, Westphalia. The second handicap, the lack of an independent party press, was overcome by the extension of the Volksstimme für Mark und Sauerland, which had been founded by the Hagen branch in November 1918, to the rest of the province under the title of Volksstimme für Westfalen und Lippe. In Buer the party also founded a paper distributed primarily in the northern Ruhr region, the Ruhrwacht, renamed Ruhrwarte in November 1919. The creation of its own press provided the party with an instrument which was considered by the party leaders as an essential pre-requisite for success. In the opinion of Walther, a leading Independent Socialist of Hagen, 'a good newspaper replaces a hundred good speakers. It is the most important means of agitation. Without it our opponents will hush up our existence.'⁸⁰⁾

By the summer of 1919 it would have been very difficult for the USPD's main opponent, the SPD, to ignore the growing strength of its rival. The radical social programme advocated by the Independent Socialists, especially their call for immediate nationalisation of the mining, iron and steel industries, attracted SPD members in large numbers. Since the social position of the average worker had hardly been changed by the revolution, the failure of the SPD to construct a socialist society alienated a working class increasingly

78) Lambers, op. cit., p.66.

79) Lucas, op. cit., p.33.

80) Quoted in Koszyk, op. cit., p.157.

radicalised by its poor economic position.⁸¹⁾ The use of Reichswehr and freecorps troops to put down unrest in the province in the spring of 1919 further damaged the standing of the SPD.⁸²⁾ Thus the USPD became the party of discontented elements of the working class. The power of its attraction is reflected in the very rapid growth of its membership, which rose from 100,000 in 1918 to 300,000 by 1919 and 893,000 by 1920.⁸³⁾ In Westphalia the party expanded primarily in the urbanised industrialised regions of central and western Westphalia. Membership figures of the USPD in the Bochum-Gelsenkirchen-Wattenscheid-Witten-Hattingen area were estimated at around the 9,000 mark by June 1919.⁸⁴⁾ At a district conference of the USPD branches of the Mark-Sauerland-Siegerland region the membership of the party in the south-western part of Regierungsbezirk Arnsberg was given as 9,000.⁸⁵⁾ The continued influx of new members was ensured by the increasing leftward trend of the party, which was in tune with the radicalism of a considerable section of the Westphalian working class. The announcement of the USPD's programme at the Leipzig party conference at the end of 1919, with its call for immediate nationalisation, the demand for the inclusion of the workers' councils in the German constitution, and the declaration that the party was aiming at a dictatorship of the proletariat, clarified the USPD's attitude on a number of issues vital to the working class.⁸⁶⁾ The experience of the Westphalian proletariat during the Ruhr uprising in the spring of 1920 did much to make the USPD an even more attractive proposition. It led to the destruction of the primacy of the SPD in the socialist movement of the Ruhr towns, and the emergence of the USPD in a position of parity. The Reichstag election of June 1920 confirmed the erosion of SPD support. In Westphalia-South the parties ran neck to neck, with a poll of 19.7 per cent

81) Lucas, op. cit., pp.60 ff..

82) Lambers, op. cit., p.93.

83) Tomlin, op. cit., p.134.

84) "Lagebericht", Münster, 12 June 1919: SAD MI IP/563.

85) Volksstimme, 29 April 1919 - Lambers, op. cit., p.93.

86) Ryder, op. cit., p.268; Tomlin, op. cit., p.134.

for the USPD and 20.8 per cent for the SPD. In Westphalia-North as a whole the USPD fared comparatively badly. Much of this electoral district was agrarian and/or Catholic and neither socialist movement made much impression. The SPD managed to retain its strongholds in the Bielefeld-Minden region. It was only in the Bottrop-Recklinghausen industrial belt that the USPD polled heavily. 87)

The electoral success of the USPD in June marked the high point in the history of the party. By the end of 1920 the unity of the movement, and its strength, had been seriously undermined. The turning point came at the party conference at Halle in October 1920, when the clash of opinions between the party's left and right wing on the issue of whether or not to join the Third International and fuse with the KPD brought victory to the left. Around two-thirds of the delegates voted for the fusion with the Communists. In December 1920 a large section of the party membership abandoned the USPD in favour of the KPD. 88)

For the USPD it was the beginning of a steady decline. The party was hard hit in the Rhenish-Westphalian industrial region, where the trend to join the Communists was very strong. Of the 73 USPD delegates from Rhineland-Westphalia present at the Halle meeting 57 voted for the left-wing ticket. 89) The resultant split weakened the effectiveness of the party in the area. The major issue from October 1920 onwards, discussed and voted upon in all branches was whether or not to join the KPD. In isolated instances local branches had already joined the KPD before the issue was debated at Halle. 90) Following the conference numerous branches voted for fusion with the radical left. 91)

87) In the Regierungsbezirk Minden the USPD secured a mere 5.3 per cent (SPD: 28.9 per cent); in the Regierungsbezirk Münster the USPD return was 10.3 per cent (SPD: 13.0 per cent); results taken from HA 5A/539.

88) Tormin, op. cit., pp.134-135.

89) Eliasberg, op. cit., p.255; report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 31 October 1920: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5370.

90) This happened in Buer and Recklinghausen - report by Regierungspräsident, Münster, 27 September 1920: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 1.

91) See the reports by Landrat, Recklinghausen, 25 October 1920 (on Datteln, Waltrop, Westerholt, Marl and Recklinghausen-Amt branches); Landrat, Coesfeld, 12 October 1920 (Coesfeld USPD); Landrat, Lüdninghausen, 20 October 1920 (Lüdninghausen branch): all in SAM VII - Bd. 1. Also reports by Landrat, Hörde, 8 February 1921; Amtmann, Werdohl, 7 January 1921: SAM I PA/343.

In the debates which broke out in the USPD branches the cases of branches collectively objecting to having contact with the KPD were very rare. 92) Pro-Communist pressure at the grassroot level invalidated decisions reached by the party functionaries. Thus a conference of USPD leaders representing the counties of Hagen, Iserlohn, Schwelm, Altena and Arnsberg voted overwhelmingly against fusion with the KPD in October 1920 (74 against - 16 for). The party membership ignored the decision and joined the KPD regardless of the views of the regional party hierarchy. 93)

The USPD was seriously weakened by the bloodletting occasioned by the split. By the end of 1920 the organisation was in a chaotic situation. The USPD organ for Westphalia, the Volksstimme, lamented the state of USPD affairs, and summarised the position of the party thus: 'The Party is numerically, politically and morally weakened and finds itself at the moment in an especially difficult position. Our organisation is shattered, our former position has been lost, newspapers have fallen into the hands of the Communists and those that remain are fighting for survival.' 94) Parallel with the move towards the KPD there also occurred a drift towards the SPD. In the 1920 to 1922 period many USPD remnants joined the SPD. 95) This trend towards the 'right' anticipated the reunion of the bulk of what remained of the USPD with the SPD in September 1922. Only a handful of Westphalian Independent Socialists remained aloof from both the KPD and SPD, to continue the USPD tradition under Ledebour. 96) But as an effective organisation the USPD ceased to exist.

(iii) The KPD.

The KPD in Westphalia, as elsewhere, emerged as a party of consequence in 1920 after the influx of USPD members. This transformed what had been very

92) See the case of Borken; report by Landrat, Borken, 15 October 1920: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 1.

93) Lambers, op. cit., p.241.

94) Volksstimme, 31 December 1920.

95) See reports contained in "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 20", 7 January 1921; "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 23", 7 March 1921; both in SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5370. Also report by Landrat, Beckum, 22 November 1920: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 1.

96) In Hagen a small USPD group continued to exist under Walther, with a limited membership and little success; Lambers, op. cit., p.153.

much a minority group into a mass party. From 1920 the party became a permanent feature of the political landscape.

Prior to October 1920 the KPD failed to make any impression on the political life of Westphalia. The strongholds of the KPD in 1919 and 1920 lay in the Rhenish sector of the Ruhr, an area in which the working class was traditionally more radical in politics. The major organisational activity lay in this region, revolving round the district secretariat of Rhineland-Westphalia established at Essen, to which the Westphalian branches were subordinated. Membership figures for Westphalian branches in 1919, as far as they are available, reveal a limited communist presence. The largest branch was situated in Dortmund, with a membership of about 200 by May 1919.⁹⁷⁾ In Hagen, where a 'Spartacus' group was formed in February 1919, the party's membership fluctuated between 25 and 30 in the course of 1919.⁹⁸⁾ On the eve of the Ruhr uprising in the spring of 1920 the position of the KPD was even worse. Numerically the branches had shrunk to insignificance.⁹⁹⁾ Whereas the western Ruhr region had such sizeable branches as Remscheid (1,100 members), Hamborn (c. 1,100), and Barmen (c. 500), the Westphalian part of the Ruhr had small branches at Dortmund (40) and Gelsenkirchen (40). In the whole of the Hagen district the KPD had only 7 members. The major reason for this state of affairs was the first of a number of party splits which were to punctuate the history of the KPD throughout the nineteen-twenties. The exclusion of the 'ultra-left' in October 1919, which ultimately formed the rival KAPD in April 1920, resulted in the loss of fifty per cent of the KPD's national membership of approximately 100,000.¹⁰⁰⁾ In Westphalia the ultra-left had strong support and the KAPD managed to attract the majority

97) "AK Generalkommando Bericht", Münster, 22 May 1919: SAD MI IP/563.

98) Lambers, op. cit., p.84.

99) For the following, Lucas, op. cit., pp.61 ff..

100) On the rivalry between the KPD and KAPD see O.K. Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt a.M., (2 edit.), 1971, pp.143 ff.

of the KPD members. ¹⁰¹⁾ Thus the split virtually destroyed the KPD in the province. The few branches which survived simply ceased to function. ¹⁰²⁾

The chaotic situation created by the split, the fact that many of the KPD members remaining true to the party in Westphalia did not approve of the national party's executive decision to participate in the 1920 election, and the strength of the USPD, all combined to restrict the KPD. The generally weak position of the party helps in turn to account for the poor results it obtained in the Reichstag election of June 1920. With returns of 1.5 per cent in both Westphalia-North and Westphalia-South the party failed to reach even the low national average of 2.1 per cent. The bulk of the vote was secured in the towns of the inner Ruhr. Outside the Ruhr the party made hardly any impact at all. In the Regierungsbezirk Minden the total number of votes polled was a mere 205 (or 0.1 per cent). ¹⁰³⁾ The best return in the province, a vote of 13.1 per cent, was secured in Iserlohn. ¹⁰⁴⁾

The fortunes of the KPD radically changed in the latter half of 1920 owing to the break-up of the USPD. New branches were formed throughout the province as whole USPD groups joined the party. The existing party branches expanded beyond recognition and acquired very high memberships. ¹⁰⁵⁾ The quick growth rate stimulated the whole of the movement. A flood of instructions descended on the party branches as the district secretariat sought to integrate the new membership and strengthen the party framework. ¹⁰⁶⁾ Further

101) H. Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt a.M., 1969, p.39.

102) Lucas, op. cit., p.62; Lambers, op. cit., p.94.

103) Regional percentages taken from HA 5A/539.

104) The high return was due to local factors, namely the able leadership and good organisation provided by the local communist functionary Brenner. In Iserlohn the radical working class vote went to the KPD; the USPD was the minority movement by 1920. See D.W. Mühlberger, 'Political Developments in Iserlohn during the Weimar Republic', (Draft of London M.Phil. thesis), p.48.

105) By 1921 the KPD had 2,300 members in the Gelsenkirchen area alone; see "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 22", Münster, 11 February 1921: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5370.

106) Cf. "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 16", Münster, 8 November 1920; also copies of KPD circulars Nr. 41 (25 October 1920), Nr. 42 (26 October 1920), and Nr. 43 (28 October 1920): SAM I PA/269.

encouragement was given to the party functionaries by the return of members previously lost to the KAPD. From the autumn of 1920 onwards the KPD absorbed whole branches of the KAPD. ¹⁰⁷⁾ By 1922 the disintegration of the KAPD had reached an advanced state. As a serious rival to the KPD the KAPD ceased to function. At a district conference in December 1921 the regional KAPD leaders came to the conclusion that the KAPD had folded up. ¹⁰⁸⁾

With the decline of both the USPD and KAPD the KPD had no serious rival for the radical left-wing vote. The general economic position favoured growth in the early nineteen-twenties. The poor economic climate led to much discontent on which the KPD thrived and prospered. As a party with a 'revolutionary stance', however, the KPD faced great problems in retaining its support. ¹⁰⁹⁾ Its revolutionary nature was one of its chief attractions; the party's failure to realise the promised utopia undermined its stability. The fortunes of the party were conditioned by the economic situation. ¹¹⁰⁾ Slump and depression were good for the party, while periods of growth and expansion were bad. Both party membership and electoral support were subject to considerable fluctuation. In Westphalia the correlation between economic and political unrest and KPD strength is very noticeable. The growth years co-incided with the crisis period of 1921 to 1923. By 1923 the party had 21,259 enrolled members in 'District Ruhr', a total which fell sharply as the economic and political position improved in the mid-'twenties. By the end of 1924 the membership figure had fallen to 11,000, to decline to 7,000 by mid-1926. ¹¹¹⁾ The election returns show a similar trend:

107) "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 18", Münster, 4 December 1920; "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 22", Münster, 11 February 1921: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5370.

108) A report on the district conference, held on 11 December 1921 contained in "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 45", Münster, 31 January 1921: SAM I PA/271.

109) Cf. Neumann, op. cit., p.87.

110) '...at times of adequate nourishment and reasonable wages the masses become indifferent to Communist ideas and ignore the demands of the party leaders. The general conclusion here is that hunger is the best party comrade and agitator for the radical Left' - taken from a police report, Buer, 10 January 1921: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 2.

111) These figures relate to 'Bezirk Ruhr', which was composed of the Unterbezirke Dortmund, Recklinghausen, Gelsenkirchen, Hamm, Münster (post 1925), and Bochum (all in Westphalia); plus Essen and Hamborn (Regierungsbezirk Düsseldorf). The Unterbezirke of Hagen, Siegen and Bielefeld, administratively part of Westphalia, belonged to the Bezirke of Niederrhein, Mittelrhein and Niedersachsen respectively - Weber, op. cit., pp.372 ff..

	1924(i)	1924(ii)	1928
Westphalia-North	9.7	6.4	8.9
Westphalia-South	21.9	12.1	11.9
Reich	12.6	9.0	10.6

The relative success of the KPD in Westphalia is closely related to the socio-economic structure in which it operated. The strongholds of the party lay in the urbanised, industrialised Ruhr region, in the Gelsenkirchen-Dortmund-Bochum triangle, an area in which industrial workers were concentrated. It was from this social category that the KPD secured the bulk of its members and votes. ¹¹²⁾ In the predominantly rural counties the party was virtually non-existent. In the industrialised centres the Communists were able to secure the support of the economically insecure. The party's most constant success came from its ability to exploit to its own advantage the precarious position of the unemployed and underemployed. ¹¹³⁾ The KPD also tended to attract the vote of the sizeable Polish minority present in the Ruhr. ¹¹⁴⁾ Of great importance to the party was the fact that Catholicism, which proved to be such a strong bulwark against Nazism, did not adversely influence its chance of success to any degree. ¹¹⁵⁾ Catholic workers who abandoned the party of their faith were not repelled by the atheistic Communist movement. It was the social position of the voter, not religion, which

112) Weber, op. cit., p.361; S. Bahne, 'Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands', in E. Matthias & R. Morsey, (eds.), Das Ende der Parteien, Düsseldorf, 1960, pp.661-662.

113) This is a feature constantly referred to by the authorities recording the party's progress; see especially police report, Gelsenkirchen, 7 November 1923: SAM I PA/362; police report, Buer 10 January 1921: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 2; report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 21 September 1922: SAD MI IP/621; police report, Recklinghausen, 5 December 1925 and report by Meldestelle Arnsberg, 16 October 1925: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 4; police report, Hagen, 26 January 1926: SAM I PA/279.

114) "Nachrichtenblatt Nr. 23", Münster, 7 March 1921: SAM Oberpräsidium Nr. 5370; police report, Dortmund, 10 December 1920: SAM I PA/269. The limited evidence available is in agreement with Lipset's observation that minority ethnic groups tend to move to the left - S. Lipset, Political Man, London, 1969, p.232, pp.242-248.

115) Cf. W. Kaltefleiter, Wirtschaft und Politik in Deutschland, Cologne, 1966, pp.67 ff.. See also the analysis by G. Plum, Gesellschaftsstruktur und politisches Bewusstsein in einer katholischen Region 1928-1933. Untersuchung am Beispiel des Regierungsbezirks Aachen, Stuttgart, 1972. pp. 31 ff..

was decisive. An analysis of the KPD's best returns secured in the 1924 December election, for example, shows that urbanised, industrialised areas produced the highest Communist poll regardless of the religious composition of the electorate:

Catholic (60% plus)	Parity	Protestant (60% plus)	
Bottrop	23.7 Buer	21.8 Hagen	17.2
Stkr.Recklinghausen	16.7 Gelsenkirchen	19.5 Schwelm	17.0
Ldkr.Recklinghausen	17.0 Herne	17.8 Dortmund	15.0 116)

The existence of a strong Communist movement coloured the political developments of Westphalia throughout the Weimar period. The fanaticism, activism and idealism of the rank and file of the movement determined to a large extent the political life of the Ruhr. In the industrial centres the KPD presented a formidable opponent to all other political directions. For the National Socialist movement, as it developed in the 'twenties, the hostility of the KPD was to make life especially difficult.

The Bourgeois Parties.

(i) The DDP.

The DDP was the only genuinely new party to emerge following the revolution of 1918. It represented an attempt to fuse the old National Liberal Party with the Progressive Liberals. ¹¹⁷⁾ The hope of uniting the 'liberal/bourgeoisie' rapidly proved an illusion. Discussions between leading representatives of both parties failed to produce a united front, as reflected in the creation of the DVP by the National Liberals under the influence and guidance of Stresemann in December 1918. ¹¹⁸⁾ The points of difference between the DDP and DVP were primarily tactical. Both parties desired to rally the middle class liberal element to prevent a total dominance of the SPD. But whereas the DDP leadership was pro-republican and favourably inclined towards the

116) Percentages calculated from data contained in HA 6A/544.

117) Neumann, op. cit., p.48. The formative years of the DDP have been thoroughly analysed by L. Albertin, Liberalismus und Demokratie am Anfang der Weimarer Republik. Eine vergleichende Analyse der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei und der Deutschen Volkspartei, Düsseldorf, 1972.

118) Background of the division discussed by Albertin, op. cit., pp.59 ff..

Social Democrats, Stresemann's DVP adopted an ambiguous attitude towards the Republic and rejected contact with the SPD. 119)

The division between the two liberal movements occurred rapidly in Westphalia. In southern Westphalia the initial steps to dissolve the National Liberal Party into the DDP were taken by representatives of the election districts of Hagen-Schwelm, Hamm-Soest, Altena-Iserlohn, Dortmund-Hörde, and Bochum-Gelsenkirchen. A conference at Hagen on 20 November 1913 saw a unanimous vote in favour of supporting the newly founded DDP. 120) The committee of the National Liberal Party of Westphalia in turn, though lamenting the lack of a united liberal front in the province, urged its membership to join the DVP. 121) Both parties formed their own party organisations and went their separate ways.

In the election to the National Assembly in January 1919 the DDP met with considerable success. In Westphalia the party performed creditably, doubling the support mobilised by the Progressive Liberals in the last pre-war election. The returns of 9.8 per cent in Westphalia-North and 10.0 per cent in Westphalia-South were, however, well below the national poll of 18.5 per cent. Much of the success of the party in the first election rested on its ability to project itself as a moderate centre block, pro-republican and socially progressive, but untainted by the extremism which the middle class feared from the side of the Social Democrats. 122) The DDP's 'voice of moderation' attracted above all the newly enfranchised female voter, whose vote the party had courted assiduously. 123)

The 1919 electoral returns marked the high point of the party's electoral strength and political influence. From 1920 the DDP was to be progressively reduced to the point at which it was little more than one of a number of

119) Tormin, op. cit., pp.142-143; Albertin, op. cit., pp.72 ff..

120) Hagener Zeitung, 21 November 1919; Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 29 November 1919.

121) See the NLP's "Aufruf" in Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 30 November 1919.

122) Tormin, op. cit., p.143.

123) Cf. Lambers, op. cit., p.59 and p.69.

small parties with which the republic was so well endowed by the mid-'twenties.

The national decline of the party was much more rapid than in Westphalia:

	1919	1920	1924(i)	1924(ii)	1928
Westph.-North	9.8	4.7	3.6	3.5	2.5
Westph.-South	10.0	5.0	4.5	6.0	4.2
Reich	18.5	8.3	5.7	6.3	4.8

The dramatic losses sustained between the 1919 and 1920 elections were occasioned by the shift of DDP voters to parties further to the right, especially to the DVP. The association of the DDP with the republican government, its variable political outlook, and the accusation by the Right of pro-socialist bias all contributed to the decline in the DDP's popularity.¹²⁴⁾ The poor economic situation in the post-war period and the effects of the inflation reduced its middle class base even further. Unable to make any significant impact on the working class, the DDP's losses sapped its vitality. As a 'middle' party appealing to reason, the DDP was stranded in a form of political no-man's land, on the defensive against both the Left and the Right.

(ii) The DVP.

The DVP developed into the major party of the German middle class in the post-war period.¹²⁵⁾ Its support came from those sections of society on which the DDP was also based: industrial, commercial and financial circles, independent craftsmen, civil servants, white-collar workers and intellectuals.¹²⁶⁾ The anti-republican, pro-monarchist, nationalist outlook of the DVP in the first few years of its existence found strong support in middle class circles. As a 'conservative' constellation, the DVP benefited, as is true of all the bourgeois parties and the Centre Party, from the extension of the vote to women. Since the DVP professed 'christian and moral goals' very strongly,

124) Neumann, op. cit., pp.49 ff.; Tormin, op. cit., pp.145 ff..

125) Neumann, op. cit., pp.54 ff.; Hartenstein calls it the 'non-proletarian party par excellence', Hartenstein, op. cit., p.251.

126) Hartenstein, op. cit., p.252.

the party was supported by many Protestant clergymen. As women were more religious, the pro-DVP outlook of the clergy brought the party electoral dividends. ¹²⁷⁾ A great asset for the party was its nationalist stance. Its anti-Versailles propaganda was effective because it was in tune with middle class sentiments and it drew support away from the rival DDP, which became tainted in the eyes of many bourgeois voters owing to its close association with the 'system'. The strength of the DVP in the immediate post-war period was further ensured by the creation of an efficient and extensive party organisation. In the electoral district of Westphalia-South, for example, the party built up a regional organisation composed of 264 branches by September 1921. Party membership in southern Westphalia stood at 74,000 by January 1920 and reached 76,350 by September 1921. ¹²⁸⁾

The electoral strength of the DVP in Westphalia corresponds broadly with the national pattern. In the case of Westphalia-North the returns lay generally below the national average, whereas in Westphalia-South the party did relatively better:

	1919	1920	1924(i)	1924(ii)	1928
Westph.-North	6.6	12.5	9.5	9.7	8.3
Westph.-South	(15.5)'	16.3	11.8	12.1	10.9
Reich	4.4	13.9	9.2	10.1	8.7

' Combined DVP-DNVP list.

The gradual decline of the DVP in the nineteen-twenties is related in part to the inability of the party to retain the mass support acquired in its early years. The difficulty of organising support on a permanent basis was due to the resistance of the bourgeoisie to organisation and a resultant lack of enthusiasm for the creation of an active inner party life which could have

¹²⁷⁾ In Hagen, one of the few towns in which the male and female vote was separated for statistical purposes in the 1919 election, the DVP, DDP, DNVP and Centre Party all attracted a greater proportion of the female vote - Lambers, op. cit., p.69; Cf. B. Vogel/D. Nohlen/R.-O. Schultze, Wahlen in Deutschland. Theorie-Geschichte-Dokumente 1848-1970, Berlin, 1971, p.141.

¹²⁸⁾ "Bericht des Geschäftsführers", in Westfälisches Tageblatt, 19 September 1921.

kept the party intact. The failure of the DVP to succeed in this area is mirrored in the drastic decline of its membership, from around 800,000 in 1920 to a mere 100,000 by 1925.¹²⁹⁾ The party lost its early momentum due to a variety of adverse developments. In the first place the DVP dismayed some of its supporters in 1923 when it became a government party for the first time. The radical change of outlook, from opposing the republic to active participation in it, a change engineered by Stresemann, was followed by a gradual drift of DVP voters towards the rival DNVP.¹³⁰⁾ This trend accelerated with the death of Stresemann, whose great prestige had held the party together in the 'twenties and perhaps prevented the DVP from sharing a fate similar to that which befell the DDP.¹³¹⁾ Certain sections of the party also left to join new middle class sectional interest parties, such as the Wirtschaftspartei, which catered for specific economic needs. The most serious blow to the party apart from Stresemann's death, was the onset of the economic crisis which engulfed Germany in 1929. This radicalised DVP supporters and moved them further to the right to feed the Nazi movement.

(iii) The DNVP.¹³²⁾

The DNVP emerged as the major party rallying the forces opposed to the revolution.¹³³⁾ The movement was an amalgam of a number of conservative elements active in Wilhelminian Germany. These ranged from the German Conservatives, the Free Conservatives, and the Christian Socialists to German-völkisch and anti-Semitic elements, forces which had been behind the Deutsche Vaterlandspartei formed during the war, to which the DNVP was in many ways the successor. Additional support came from the ranks of the Pan-German League and elements of the National Liberal Party.¹³⁴⁾ The fusion of these

129) Tormin, op. cit., pp.148-149.

130) Tormin, op. cit., p.150; Lambers, op. cit., p.208.

131) Neumann, op. cit., p.60.

132) For the early history of the DNVP see the studies by Liebe, op. cit., and L. Hertzmann, DNVP. Right-Wing Opposition in the Weimar Republic 1918-1924, Lincoln, 1963.

133) Neumann, op. cit., p.61.

134) Liebe, op. cit., p.12.

forces, albeit very loosely, in one right-wing movement made the Right a formidable proposition in the early Weimar period and promised an end to the fragmentation which had characterised its history in the early twentieth century.

The closing of the right-wing ranks only affected Westphalian developments in 1918-1919 to a limited degree. Given the social and religious make-up of the province, the DNVP failed to rally much support in its early years. The strength of the Left, and the hostility with which it met right-wing movements in the post-war period, restricted the DNVP's progress. The major centres of support were in those areas from which the old pre-war conservative movements had secured the bulk of their support, areas predominantly rural and Protestant, primarily the Siegerland and the north-eastern parts of the Regierungsbezirk Minden. The counties of Lübbecke, Minden, Herford, Halle and Bielefeld provided the Westphalian DNVP with approximately three-quarters of its total membership by 1923. ¹³⁵⁾

The electoral returns of the party were initially low. Even by 1920 the DNVP failed to attract the volume of support formerly obtained by the DK, RP and anti-Semites in 1912. ¹³⁶⁾ This despite the extension of the vote to women, a development which assisted the DNVP considerably. ¹³⁷⁾ It was in the post-1920 period that the DNVP extended its narrow base and secured more widespread support:

	1919	1920	1924(i)	1924(ii)	1928
Westph.-North	8.7	9.4	14.7	16.2	9.2
Westph.-South	(15.3)'	6.0	12.3	12.6	8.6
Reich	10.3	15.1	19.5	20.5	14.2

' DVP-DNVP combined list.

¹³⁵⁾ 31,000 of the 45,460 members of the Westphalian DNVP were in Bezirksverein Westphalia-East, Liebe, op. cit., pp.135-136.

¹³⁶⁾ The conservative parties secured 9.3 per cent of the 1912 vote - Bertram, op. cit., p.207; in 1920 the DNVP polled 7.7 per cent.

¹³⁷⁾ Liebe, op. cit., p.17; Tormin, op. cit., p.151.

The electoral statistics hide the uneven distribution of support in the province. Unlike the DDP and DVP, whose strength was scattered more evenly throughout the province, the DNVP thrived primarily in the agrarian Protestant areas and did very badly in Catholic rural districts. This emerges very clearly in an analysis of the DNVP's performance in the Reichstag election of December 1924, which marked the high point of its support in the province. In predominantly Protestant rural counties, such as Lübbecke, Wittgenstein and Siegen, the party secured 54.6, 48.1, and 45.8 per cent respectively. In predominantly Catholic rural counties, such as Meschede, Münster and Warendorf, the DNVP failed to make any impact, securing such low returns as 4.5, 3.8, and 3.4 per cent respectively. 138)

In the urban centres the religious composition of the population played a less crucial role in determining the voting pattern and social factors were more significant. The best returns were achieved in towns situated outside the Ruhr region in which the middle class formed a larger percentage of the population, such as Siegen (30.7 per cent), Herford (20.6 per cent), Bielefeld (16.4 per cent) and Iserlohn (15.9 per cent). 139)

The major successes of the DNVP were in areas with a long tradition of right-wing politics. In the Siegen-Wittgenstein region in southern Westphalia and in the north-eastern counties of the Regierungsbezirk Minden conservative parties, especially the Christlichsoziale Partei, had been particularly strong since the late nineteenth century. The influence exerted by the Protestant clergy on the political inclinations of predominantly Protestant communities survived the war. The DNVP was also assisted by the widespread discontent of the farmers. The fixed quotas levied on the farmers by government decree aroused considerable anger which was utilised by the party to expand its support. The intensity of feeling on the subject of production quotas can be gauged from the fact that police commandos had to be employed to enforce

138) These percentages are calculated from data given in HA 6A/544.

139) Ibid..

collections in the face of armed opposition by the farmers. ¹⁴⁰⁾

In the nineteen-twenties the DNVP was able to engage the support of people from a much wider social spectrum than those who had carried the pre-war conservative parties. ¹⁴¹⁾ In Westphalia support ranged from the working class to the aristocracy. In the case of the aristocracy the party was able to break through the barrier of religion, with the bulk of the Catholic aristocracy inclining towards it. ¹⁴²⁾ The 'Junker' image did not alienate working class support. ¹⁴³⁾ The success in rallying workers to the party occurred despite the great limitations placed on the DNVP in the urban centres, especially those of the Ruhr, where the party found it difficult to organise propaganda and hold public meetings due to the hostility of the Left. ¹⁴⁴⁾

The working class interest in, and support for, the party came from right-wing workers present in the province. On the initiative of a number of labour leaders in Bielefeld a 'Reichsarbeiterausschuss' was formed at the end of 1919, and this led to the formulation of a party programme which was much more sympathetic towards working class interests. ¹⁴⁵⁾ The 'Westphalian Programme' framed by the Bielefeld group outlined a social policy which went far beyond that adopted by the party at its foundation. A considerable section of the 'Westphalian Programme' was included in a revision of the national

140) The most active opposition came in the Minden area where farmers armed themselves with 'shotguns, cudgels, axes and pitchforks' to resist the collection of their quotas - see Mindener Tageblatt, 22 and 25 February 1920; also reports by Landrat, Minden, 13 February 1920 and police report, Neuenknick, 13 February 1920: SAD MI IP/564.

141) Cf. Liebe, op. cit., pp.16-17.

142) H. Müller, (ed.), Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus, Munich, 1965, p.37.

143) The DN Arbeiterbund enjoyed some support even in the working class strongholds of the inner Ruhr - see police report, Gelsenkirchen, 29 December 1925: SAM I PA/369.

144) Cf. the letter of complaint by the Schwerte branch, which speaks of 'the disruption of election meetings by the SPD and KPD. Speakers have been attacked and prevented from speaking by the singing of the 'Internationale' and the shouting of slogans such as 'Down with the dogs of Reaction' and 'Blood must flow'; DNVP Vorstand der OG Schwerte to Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 8 April 1924: SAM I PA/387.

145) Liebe, op. cit., p.25.

programme by the central party committee, and formed part of the propaganda platform on which the DNVP rested in the nineteen-twenties.

The working class response to the DNVP in Westphalia has to be kept in perspective. It was not extensive and it did not alter the predominantly bourgeois nature of the party. The DNVP in the region, as in the nation, was based on the support of academics, professional and business interests; it was a middle class party. The nationalist trumpeting of the party, its hostility towards the Republic, and its monarchist sentiments struck a chord in the hearts of those who looked back with longing to the Wilhelminian era.

The conglomeration of interests represented in the DNVP made permanent unity difficult. The need for unity, enforced on the Right by fears of radical change current in 1918 and 1919, did not survive in the nineteen-twenties when events proved these fears somewhat exaggerated. The first serious loss came with the exit of the anti-Semites in 1922.¹⁴⁶⁾ The DVFP, organised by Wulle and von Graefe, secured some backing in the Protestant agrarian counties in eastern and southern Westphalia, where the DNVP found its strongest support. From the mid-'twenties dissension within the party on points of policy and tactics led to increasing difficulties. These in turn led to further fragmentation. The association of the DNVP with the Republic, the consequence of its participation in the government, weakened the popularity of the party in the country at a time when internal divisions sapped its vitality.¹⁴⁷⁾ In the spring of 1928 one of the most powerful pillars of the party, the regional agrarian land leagues, broke away to form the Christlich-nationale Bauern- und Landvolk Partei. This made serious inroads on the Protestant rural vote which had been traditionally behind the DNVP. In Westphalia the Landvolk displaced the DNVP in the counties of Lübbecke, Minden and Halle. In Lübbecke, a major bastion of the DNVP since 1920, the absolute majority it had gained

¹⁴⁶⁾ Liebe, op. cit., pp.61 ff..

¹⁴⁷⁾ On the problems of the DNVP post-1924 see the analysis by A. Chanady, 'The Disintegration of the German Peoples' Party 1924-1930', Journal of Modern History, 39, 1967, pp.65 ff..

in the December election of 1924 was replaced by a relative majority for the Landvolk in May 1928. ¹⁴⁸⁾ Further losses were sustained following the cessation of the Christian Socialist and Volkskonservativ elements in 1929. ¹⁴⁹⁾ The impact of these developments on the Westphalian DNVP was very serious. The Christian Socialists orientated themselves towards the Protestant circles active in the Christlicher Volksdienst since 1924. The fusion of the two produced the CSVD in the spring of 1930. ¹⁵⁰⁾ The CSVD made considerable inroads into the DNVP's vote in the Siegerland, where it replaced the DNVP as the premier party in the September election of 1930, and reduced the DNVP's support in the Minden-Ravensberg region. ¹⁵¹⁾ The DNVP's losses to the Volkskonservative Partei were less significant and were confined primarily to the north-eastern counties of Westphalia, where the Volkskonservative Partei managed to rally some support. ¹⁵²⁾

The secessions in the late nineteen-twenties seriously weakened the DNVP's efforts to retain its position as the premier party of the Right. The decline of the party coincided with important re-alignments on the Right in general. This is best seen in the emergence of a radical right-wing alternative which had been overshadowed by the DNVP in the 'twenties - the NSDAP. The collapse of the DNVP, which was symptomatic of increasing unrest in the middle class, helped to produce a political situation conducive to Nazi expansion.

The Catholic Centre Party.

Of the many political movements of the Weimar Republic the Centre Party

148) Milatz, op. cit., Appendix - maps for "Reichstagswahl 7 Dezember 1924" and "Reichstagswahl 20 Mai 1928".

149) Chanady, op. cit., pp.85 ff..

150) Cf. the study by G. Opitz, Der Christlich-soziale Volksdienst. Versuch einer protestantischen Partei in der Weimarer Republik, Düsseldorf, 1969.

151) Ibid., pp.340-341.

152) Westphalia-North was one of the few electoral districts in which the Volkskonservativen had some success. In the 1930 Reichstag election the party managed to attract 14,733 votes in the area - E. Jonas, Die Volkskonservativen 1928-1933. Entwicklung, Struktur, Standort und staatspolitische Zielsetzung, Düsseldorf, 1965, p.88.

proved the most stable. It was practically immune to the fluctuations which affected other political organisations. In part this was due to its nature - it was less a 'party' and more a 'confessional community'. The religious tie proved sufficient to keep together elements often divided by economic interests and aspirations. The close relationship between the Catholic Church and the Centre Party ensured a high degree of support and stability. The confessional tie still dictated the political response of the majority of Catholics. Catholics were still, in the words of a Catholic Reichstag deputy, 'born into the Centre Party'. 153)

During the Weimar period the Centre was supported by, on average, around 60 per cent of voting Catholics. This percentage was secured primarily by the extension of the vote to women, a development which benefited the party enormously. 154) In Westphalia, with its large Catholic population, the Centre enjoyed considerable support, well above the national average:

	1919	1920	1924(i)	1924(ii)	1928
Westph.-N.	42.1	42.8	35.8	38.1	31.5
Westph.-S.	23.3	28.0	26.0	27.3	23.3
Reich	19.7	13.6'	16.6'	17.4'	15.2'

' excluding BVP

The mobilisation of Westphalian Catholics in the immediate post-war years was particularly successful. The fear of the danger of secularism, atheism, and nationalisation were especially strong in Catholic circles in the province. 155) At the outset of the revolution the Rhenish-Westphalian Centre Party rejected both the council system and the 'government of the people's representatives'. To counter these 'threats' the Catholic clergy were much more open in their efforts to rally the faithful and secure support for the Centre Party, and

153) Quoted by J. Becker, 'Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei 1918-1933. Grundprobleme ihrer Entwicklung', Das Parlament, II (Beilage), 1968, p.3.

154) Ibid., p.4; further Morsey, op. cit., p.321. Even this high percentage compares poorly with the 86.3 per cent mobilised by the Centre Party at the height of the Kulturkampf.

155) Morsey, in Fürst, op. cit., pp.31-32.

virtually urged the Catholics to vote for the party as part of their 'Christian duty'. ¹⁵⁶⁾ The influence of the clergy over the voting habits of their flocks was to be a constant feature of the Weimar period, and the hostility of the Church and clerics was to be directed not only against the Left, but also increasingly, from the late nineteen-twenties, against the radical Right. ¹⁵⁷⁾ The support of the church assisted the Centre Party enormously. The influence of the party was also reinforced by the extensive Catholic press in Westphalia. By the mid-'twenties there were some 81 regional Catholic papers, of which the 'Trenonia' (Dortmund - 40,000 copies) and the 'Münsterische Anzeiger' (Münster - 37,000 copies) had the greatest significance. ¹⁵⁸⁾

The distribution of the Centre Party's vote was naturally closely related to the distribution of the Catholic population in the province. In the 16 counties which were solidly Catholic the Centre Party enjoyed an absolute majority in all the Reichstag elections between 1919 and 1930. ¹⁵⁹⁾ In the bulk of these predominantly rural counties, the party achieved very high returns. In the Reichstag election of December 1924, for example, the Centre Party secured 86.3 per cent of the vote in County Borken, 84.5 per cent in County Warendorf, 81.8 per cent in County Münster, and 80.9 per cent in County Meschede. ¹⁶⁰⁾ The conservatism of the rural population and its greater social coherence contributed towards the party's success.

In the urban districts, especially in the Ruhr, the ability of the Centre

156) Cf. Kühr, op. cit., pp.59 ff.. See also the electoral appeal by the Catholic priests of Münster in January 1919, in which it was pointed out to the Catholic population that 'den ersten Anspruch auf unsere Stimme hat die Zentrumsparthei, nach ihren christlich-demokratischen Programme die zuverlässige Vertreterin der politischen, sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Interessen aller Stände, nach ihren altbewährten kirchenpolitischen Grundsätzen die tapfere Vorkämpferin für unsere religiös-kirchlichen Rechte'. Reprinted in G.A. Ritter and S. Miller, (eds.), Die deutsche Revolution 1918-1919, Frankfurt a.M., 1968, pp.263-264.

157) On this see especially Plum, op. cit., pp.152 ff..

158) Morsey, op. cit., pp.603-605.

159) These were: Reg. Bez. Arnsberg: Olpe, Meschede, Brilon, Arnsberg, Lippstadt.
Reg. Bez. Minden: Warburg, Höxter, Büren, Paderborn, Wieden-
brück.
Reg. Bez. Münster: Warendorf, Münster, Coesfeld, Borken, Ahaus
and Steinfurt.

160) Calculated from results taken from HA 6A/544.

Party to attract the Catholic vote was noticeably less. In the industrialised, urban environment the influence of the Church on Catholics was muted by social and environmental factors. The anonymity of the voter in towns probably contributed to the greater readiness of Catholics to vote for other parties. Thus in Bottrop, in which Catholics formed 75.6 per cent of the population, the Centre Party secured only 36.2 per cent of the vote in the Reichstag election of 1924. In Recklinghausen the respective figures were 70.8 and 33.9 per cent; in Hagen 66.3 and 20.8 per cent; and in Gladbeck 58.9 and 28.5 per cent. 161) A comparison between the rural and urban Catholic vote in the December election of 1924 substantiates the 'town-country factor' observed elsewhere. 162)

The presence of a solid Centre Party vote was a constant feature of Westphalian politics in the Weimar era. The high Catholic vote in the rural counties, and the strong support enjoyed by the party in those urban centres which had a significant Catholic population, were a formidable obstacle limiting the chances of non-Catholic parties. The tenacity with which the party held on to its vote created great difficulties for the NSDAP in the post-1929 period, and restricted its success in Westphalia.

161) Calculated from results taken from HA 6A/544.

162) Kühr, op. cit., pp.278 ff.; Kaltefleiter, op. cit., p.52.

Chapter 4. RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD, 1919 TO 1923.

For the purpose of this analysis the term 'right-wing extremism' is limited to those movements active in Westphalia which were not prepared to accept the Weimar State, and whose main characteristic was an uncompromising rejection of the democratic system introduced in 1918. Such parties as the DNVP and the DVP do not come into this category, for in spite of their initial antagonism towards the Republic, they were drawn into the "system", even if within the DNVP opposition to it remained strong throughout the Weimar period. 1) The main concern will be with the völkisch-anti-Semitic movements which fed the National Socialist movement, cultivated the ground on which Nazism was to flourish ideologically and organisationally, and provided the bulk of the early membership of the NSDAP. The history of these movements must be seen as an integral part of the genesis of National Socialism. The material for Westphalia provides ample evidence of the connections between the right-wing radical groups and the emerging National Socialist movement. Official party histories written during the Third Reich were to play down the importance of völkisch movements and emphasize the uniqueness and the independence of National Socialism, a party line which grossly distorted the facts. 2)

It is clear that in the early years of the Nazi movement individuals interested in, and involved with, the party more often than not also provided

- 1) For a review of the problem of separating conservatism from right-wing radicalism see H. Fenske, Konservatismus und Rechtsradikalismus in Bayern nach 1918, Bad Homburg/Berlin, 1969, pp.9 ff.; pp.313 ff..
- 2) Typical is the account by the 'official historian' of the Westphalian NSDAP: "Der Nationalsozialismus wäre aber ein trübes Destillat, wäre er aus diesen (i.e. völkisch, anti-Semitic) manchmal auseinander doch auch scharf widersprechenden Richtungen hervorgegangen. Die Reinheit und Klarheit, die logische und geschichtliche Folgerichtigkeit, die in der nationalsozialistischen Idee und Bewegung zum Ausdruck kommen, weisen auf einen schöpferischen Urheber zurück, auf Adolf Hitler. Und so kann niemand seinen Nationalsozialismus weiter zurückführen als zu der Zeit, als der Führer als Prediger vor das deutsche Volk trat"; in F.A. Beck, Kampf und Sieg. Geschichte der NSDAP im Gau Westfalen-Süd von den Anfängen bis zur Machtübernahme, Dortmund, 1938, p.41.

the activism and membership of similar extremist movements. This was inevitable in some ways, owing to the relative insignificance of the early Nazi movement. It had yet to establish a distinct identity. It was only after 1925 that the National Socialist Party secured its independence and ceased to be an appendage of völkisch and military circles. In the early years of the movement it was too much part of the amorphous völkisch movement and linked in numerous ways with right-wing extremist groups. 3)

The DVSuTB. 4)

The DVSuTB emerged in the spring of 1919 at the Bamberg meeting of the Alldeutsche Verband, one of the most important political organisations of the extreme right to survive the 1918 Revolution. Though the DVSuTB was soon but one of over a hundred different völkisch and anti-Semitic organisations active in Germany in the immediate post-war period, it was by far 'the largest, most active and most influential anti-Semitic organisation in Germany'. 5) The importance of the DVSuTB should not be overestimated, but it is clear that in the early years of the Weimar Republic no other organisation did more, albeit often unwittingly and indirectly, to assist the growth of National Socialism. 6)

In Westphalia, despite the fact that the province lacked a tradition of

- 3) The formative years of the NSDAP are covered by G. Franz-Willing, op. cit.; W. Horn, Führerideologie und Parteiorganisation in der NSDAP, Düsseldorf, 1972; W. Maser, op. cit.. See also H.-A. Jacobsen & W. Jochmann, Ausgewählte Dokumente zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus 1933-1945, Bielefeld, 1966; J. Nyomarkay, Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party, Minneapolis, 1967; D. Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party 1919-1933, Vol. I, Newton Abbot, 1971; A. Tyrell, Führer befehl... Selbstzeugnisse aus der 'Kampfzeit' der NSDAP. Dokumentation und Analyse, Düsseldorf, 1969.
- 4) The history of the DVSuTB has been the object of a recent study by U. Lohalm, völkischer Radikalismus. Die Geschichte des DVSuTB 1919-1923, Hamburg, 1970; see also W. Krebs, 'Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund (DSTB) 1919-1922', in Die Bürgerlichen Parteien in Deutschland, Bd. I, Leipzig, 1968, pp.774-777.
- 5) The view of the Reichskommissar für die Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, quoted by Lohalm, op. cit., p.11.
- 6) Lohalm, op. cit., pp.304-323. Cf. Schön, op. cit., pp.17 ff..

anti-Semitism, the DVSuTB was able to establish itself remarkably quickly and to organise significant support. 7) This is surprising in that the social and economic structure of the province was not conducive to the penetration of völkisch and anti-Semitic ideas. It was the acute class struggle in the post-war period, especially in the Ruhr towns, where it took on its most extreme form, which called forth reaction. In the larger industrial centres left-wing politics dominated the scene and it was in these towns that the DVSuTB was able to organise its most active branches. The response came from those middle class elements which felt most threatened by the 'revolutionary fervour' of the Left and the political power secured by the left-wing parties in the post-revolutionary period. The focus of the regional activity of the DVSuTB was Hattingen, where one of the six main offices subordinated to the Hamburg centre was established by the end of 1919. From Hattingen one of the founder members of the Reichshammerbund, Walter Hoffmann, organised and controlled the Gau Westphalia-Lippe of the DVSuTB. 8) A network of local organisations rapidly spanned the province, the bulk of the branches lying within the boundaries of the Regierungsbezirk of Arnsberg. In the Minden administrative region a few branches were established. These were mainly in the predominantly Protestant counties of the north-west; the Catholic counties of the centre and the south were hardly affected. The Regierungsbezirk of Münster, with its predominantly Catholic population, was also less susceptible to the anti-Semitic appeal, though the town of Münster itself, and the towns lying within the Ruhr region, developed sizeable branches. In Gelsenkirchen, for example, the DVSuTB was able very rapidly to establish a considerable presence, the branch numbering over one thousand members by July 1920. The branch soon made its presence felt in the town and gave cause for complaint by the Jewish community, which protested against

7) Lohalm, op. cit., p.119.

8) For the following see Lohalm, op. cit., pp.93 ff..

the distribution of anti-Semitic pamphlets and literature, the fixing of placards on Jewish shops and property, the daubing of anti-Semitic slogans on the doors of the town's synagogue, and the activities of street speakers engaged in whipping-up anti-Jewish feelings. 9) Bochum and Dortmund were two other notable strongholds of the DVSuTB. In Dortmund the League had some four hundred members at the time of its dissolution in July 1922. The high membership of the branch at a time when the DVSuTB had lost much of its following in most parts of the province was due to the organisational ability and commitment of the leader of the branch, a grammar school teacher named Helmke, who also organised the local branch of the Deutsch-Sozialistische Partei. 10)

The DVSuTB was very much an urban movement. Of the 23 branches noted by the authorities all but a few were town based. The largest branches operated within the Ruhr industrial belt; those in Hattingen, Bochum, Gelsenkirchen, Witten and Dortmund being the most significant. Other important branches lay on the periphery of this "inner belt": Hagen, Lüdenscheid, Iserlohn, Arnsberg, Soest and Werl. 11) The dissolution of the organisation in Prussia on 8 July 1922 did little more than force the membership to find a new spiritual home. The anti-Semitic activities continued as before. 12) By the time of the ban the League had already lost considerable momentum in parts of Westphalia. This is especially true of those branches which lay outside the Ruhr complex. In the Regierungsbezirk of Minden the organisation had declined markedly by 1922, with only four branches still remaining in existence; one of these, at Brakel, County Höxter, had neither held a public meeting nor made its presence felt in any other way for over a year. 13) In

9) The forms of activity are listed in a letter of complaint by the Vorstand der Synagogengemeinde Gelsenkirchen to the Police President, Gelsenkirchen, 22 December 1919, and in a letter to the Regierungspräsident of Arnsberg, Gelsenkirchen, 10 April 1920: SAM I PA/383.

10) Police report, Dortmund, 1 August 1922: SAM I PA/372.

11) Meldestelle Arnsberg, 13 September 1922 and 25 August 1922: SAM I PA/372.

12) Police report, Dortmund, 23 November 1922; report by the Landrat, Arnsberg, 23 November 1922: SAM I PA/372.

13) Report by the Landrat, Höxter, 1 August 1922: SAD MI IP/569.

the larger urban centres, with the exception of Paderborn, the movement had collapsed long before the ban was imposed. In Bielefeld the local branch had dissolved itself as early as March 1921 following the discovery of irregularities in the branch finances and the removal of the local leader.¹⁴⁾ The branches at Minden, Herford, and Bad Oeynhausen had also disappeared before July 1922, basically because of lack of support and apathy.¹⁵⁾

A variety of factors account for the development and strength of organised anti-Semitism in post-war Germany, factors which also explain the situation in Westphalia. In the first place its appeal was enhanced by the heightened nationalism which was such a feature of the end phase of the war. Added to this was the widespread fear, especially among the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie, of possible radical changes as well as the possibility of the spread of Bolshevism from Russia to Germany.¹⁶⁾ However unjustified these fears may seem in retrospect, they led to the emergence of widespread "anti-feelings": militant anti-Liberalism, anti-Marxism, anti-Semitism, even a degree of unconscious anti-Capitalism. In Westphalia right-wing extremism was also fed by two factors peculiar to the province and the surrounding region. These were, first, the proximity of the allied occupation forces (part of western Westphalia was occupied) and, secondly, the experiences of the revolutionary period, especially the emergence of left-wing radicalism in the wake of the Kapp Putsch. The unrest of 1919 and 1920 involved the appearance of the Reichswehr and Free Corps formations within the Ruhr region and heavy fighting with "Reds". Both factors favoured the spread of nationalist and anti-bolshevist anti-Semitism. This explains the immediate and rapid support marshalled by the DVSuTB within the province.

There were also strong undercurrents of 'economic anti-Semitism' in

14) Police report, Bielefeld, 13 July 1922: SAD MI IP/569.

15) Report by the Landrat, Minden, 15 July 1922; police report, Herford, 20 July 1922: SAD MI IP/569.

16) Lohalm, op. cit., p.124.

Westphalia. The post-war period, with its food shortages, capital scarcity, rapid inflation, general economic uncertainty and widespread political and social instability, was a time in which those individuals who felt their economic situation threatened were much more likely to accept the simple anti-Semitic formula to explain their plight, especially as Germany was inundated with anti-Jewish literature. 17) Inevitably in such a situation anti-Semitism was much more likely to find support in towns where Jewish firms controlled a significant percentage of trade and industry. The success of the DVSuTB in the small town of Warburg in eastern Westphalia underlines the power of economic anti-Semitism exploited and encouraged by the League. In a report on local anti-Jewish agitation the Landrat of Warburg thus analysed the situation in the town: 'The fact that the Jews control virtually the whole of the livestock, grain and cloth trades explains . . . why the attitude of the population towards the Jews has become much more negative. Added to this is that through the press, through meetings, and the more widespread and significant anti-Semitic movement, a change of attitude towards the Jews has taken place in the mind of the local population.' 18) Even in this relative backwater the DVSuTB was able to organise meetings attended by over 1,000 people. 19)

Who turned to the DVSuTB? The membership of the organisation in Germany had a relatively broad social base, running from the petit-bourgeoisie to the landed class. 20) The national leadership was predominantly bourgeois, while the regional and local leadership was predominantly petit-bourgeois, with academics strongly represented. For Westphalia data is very limited, for no membership lists fell into the hands of the police at the time of the ban. The occupations given in reports suggest a middle class composition: civil

17) In 1920 alone the DVSuTB distributed some 7.6 million pamphlets, 4.7 million handbills and 7.8 million stickers. Figures given by J. Noakes, op. cit., p.10.

18) Report by the Landrat, Warburg, 11 October 1919: SAD MI IP/563.

19) Report by the Landrat, Warburg, 12 September 1919: SAD MI IP/563.

20) Lohalm, op. cit., pp.107 ff..

servants, factory owners and teachers were prominent. As to the rank and file membership, virtually nothing can be gleaned from the reports. In Warburg the DVSuTB was able to find a strong following in the pupils of the local grammar school. They were often engaged in the distribution of anti-Semitic literature in the town. It is unlikely, however, that they were fully paid-up members of the organisation. 21) Not too far off the mark as a broad description of the general membership, allowing for the bias, is a report in the left-wing Volkswille, which refers to 'ossified bourgeoisie and retired army officers'. 22)

The prohibition of the DVSuTB in 1922 accelerated the drift of its membership towards a variety of other organisations, a drift which had set in long before the official ban. Leading personalities of the Westphalian DVSuTB and the bulk of the membership sought refuge in the DSP, the Bund Oberland and the WB, and above all in the NSDAP. Ultimately the latter profited more than any other völkisch or right-wing organisation active within the province. This is not surprising in view of the friendly attitude shown towards the National Socialists by the leadership of the DVSuTB. Since 1920 the Bundesleitung of the organisation had encouraged the regional and local branches of the League to further the cause of the Nazis by supporting the creation of Nazi party branches. 23) The close relationship between the DVSuTB and the NSDAP was later recognised in the official history of the Nazi Party of Westphalia in which it was noted that 'in the first instance National Socialists came almost everywhere from the so-called "Völkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund". 24) In Hagen old members of the League swelled the ranks of the NSDAP. Here both organisations were led by the same person, a civil

21) Letter by the Vorstand der Synagogengemeinde Warburg to the Regierungspräsident of Minden, Warburg, September 1919: SAD MI IP/563.

22) Volkswille, (Gelsenkirchen edition), 12 February 1921.

23) Jacobson & Jochmann, op. cit., p.15.

24) Beck, op. cit., p.193.

engineer named Wachenfeld, who was making a name for himself within the völkisch movement in southern Westphalia. 25) Wachenfeld had already persuaded DVSuTB members to form a branch of the NSDAP a year before the ban was placed on the League. 26) In some towns the disappearance of the DVSuTB led to the formation of branches which were little more than the continuation of the League in a new guise. In Unna the dissolution of the League, somewhat belatedly, in the spring of 1923, saw its former leader Meinert re-emerge as the organiser of a newly established branch of the NSDAP, which contained several members of the old organisation. Meinert was to be the leading figure in the local National Socialist movement until 1933. 27) A similar development also occurred in Witten, where the former DVSuTB supporters formed a Nazi branch following the ban of the League. 28) In several instances former DVSuTB members were instrumental at a much later date in furthering National Socialist interests. In Buer and Bottrop old supporters of the League were behind the formation of Nazi branches in 1925. 29)

Clearly the DVSuTB did much to promote the emerging National Socialist movement within Westphalia, both in an organisational as well as in an ideological capacity. The anti-Semites organised in the League were ideal recruiting material for the racist Nazi movement and the National Socialists benefited in several ways from the "pioneering" efforts of the DVSuTB.

The DSP.

The DSP played a role similar to that of the DVSuTB in the development of the NSDAP. Unlike the DVSuTB, the DSP was organised as a political party and was first mooted at a meeting of the racist Germanenorden in December 1918. This gave rise to a Deutschsoziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft organised by Freiherr von Sebottendorf in May 1919. The programme of the party, and the

25) Police report, Hagen, 25 July 1922: SAM I PA/372.

26) Lambers, op. cit., p.165.

27) Beck, op. cit., pp.349 ff.; see also the account in the VB, 16 April 1925.

28) Beck, op. cit., pp.31 and 325.

29) Lohalm, op. cit., pp.320-321.

name it ultimately assumed, were the result of a meeting held in Hanover in April 1920, at which Alfred Brunner, an engineer from Düsseldorf, took over the leadership of the party. ³⁰⁾ Initially the DSP was directed from Hanover, but by November 1920 it had moved its party headquarters to Berlin. ³¹⁾ The party programme was very similar to that of the NSDAP with the emphasis on nationalism, anti-Semitism, land and financial reform. Such differences as there were between the two parties were primarily tactical in nature. Thus the DSP made more effort to rally working class support, placing greater emphasis on the socialist content of the programme. ³²⁾ The most important difference, in völkisch eyes, was the "parliamentary" nature of the DSP, which involved itself in elections from the start, though without much success. ³³⁾ The similarities of the DSP and the NSDAP brought the parties into contact on the branch and national level, contact which turned into rivalry and antagonism as the two movements vied for the control of the völkisch movement. Efforts to resolve the competition were made at Salzburg in August 1920. At the meeting it was agreed that the DSP should concentrate on Germany north of the Main, leaving southern Germany to the NSDAP, with the exception of the DSP branch established in Nuremberg. The agreement did not end the friction between the two parties. Brunner especially found the enmity tragic in view of the similarities between the DSP and the NSDAP, and made repeated efforts to fuse the two movements. But these came to nothing owing to Hitler's insistence that the leadership of such a united party would have to be centred on Munich and not on Berlin. ³⁴⁾

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- 30) On the DSP see W. Horn, op. cit., pp.82 ff.; F.L. Carsten, The Rise of Fascism, London, 1967, pp.100 ff.; M. Weissbecker, 'Deutschsozialistische Partei (DSP) 1919-1922', in Die Bürgerlichen Parteien in Deutschland, op. cit., pp.763-764.
- 31) The first Rundschreiben was dated Berlin, 25 November 1920: HA 42/839.
- 32) The members of the DSP addressed each other with the "comrade" of the working class movements - Carsten, Fascism ..., op. cit., p.100.
- 33) The DSP secured only 2,084 votes in the Reichstag election of 1920; Maser, op. cit., p.228.
- 34) "Rundschreiben Nr. 5", 10 May 1921: HA 42/839; Weissbecker, op. cit., p.763.

In the conflict with the NSDAP the DSP suffered very much from the organisational fragmentation which characterised its structure. The DSP was never subjected to an effective centralised leadership or organisation, which was a consequence of the early history of the party. The first party branches were founded independently of any central organisation, which did not emerge until after the Hanover meeting of April 1920. It was a considerable time before the Berlin headquarters issued the first circular in November. The first DSP branches were thus left to themselves for long enough to develop their own ideas and independence. One important consequence of this situation was that the small, relatively isolated branches, became vulnerable to the pull exerted by the more centralised and activist National Socialist movement, a fact which ultimately hastened the collapse of the DSP. 35) The lack of central control also weakened the effectiveness of the movement in that it lacked drive. Branches pursued their efforts at their leisure and more often than not ignored the directives coming from party headquarters. The party also lacked another requirement for success, namely adequate finances. Financial difficulties dogged the DSP from the start and reduced the impact of the movement. As early as October 1920 an appeal went out from party headquarters to the branches asking for more effort if the party was to succeed since 'the money sources available from Westphalia and the Rhineland are exhausted. In order to expand, money must be found.' 36)

In Westphalia the DSP made very little impact and reflected its general weakness in northern Germany. Ironically, in view of the Salzburg agreement with the NSDAP, the two largest branches of the party were situated in the National Socialist sphere of influence south of the Main, namely at Munich, which had some 400 members, and at Nuremberg, which was 300 strong and was

35) Franz-Willing notes that the "lack of strong organisation was the main reason why the DSP dissolved itself after a few years and merged into the NSDAP", Franz-Willing, op. cit., p.89.

36) "An alle Ortsgruppen", 10 October 1920: HA 42/839.

regarded as an exception under the agreement. 37) For Westphalia no membership figures are available, but from the little evidence of party activity one can deduce that the DSP had but a small following. The major centres of the party were Bielefeld and Wanne-Eickel, which were established before the Hanover meeting, both being represented by delegates at the meeting. 38) Hattingen also had a branch, which was founded by former supporters of the DVSuTB in May 1921. The branch enjoyed some success in the area and was able to secure the active support of Walter Hoffmann, Gauleiter of the Westphalian DVSuTB. The branch was very small at its formation, numbering a mere five souls in 1921, a figure which expanded to twelve by 1922. 39) The only other branch was organised in Siegen, but it failed to make any impact in the town. Its existence only came to the notice of the authorities in November 1923, when it was observed that the local NSDAP had emerged from a DSP branch. 40) Thus the impact of the DSP was very limited. The reasons can be deduced from the history of the Hattingen branch, about which there is some material. Its weakness reflected the lack of active support and the absence of sufficient financial resources, which restricted the propaganda of the branch. Throughout 1921 it met privately, barring one public meeting in August. The major propaganda effort was limited to material drawn from the Völkischer Beobachter, which circulated within the branch from its inception. The highlight of the brief branch history was a major public meeting addressed by Feder, in his capacity as leader of the "Kampfbund zur Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft" in March 1922. 41)

The Westphalian branches of the DSP had little contact with the central

37) The largest and most active branch in the north was Kiel, which had 58 members in 1921: Mitgliederverzeichnis, 1921: HA 42/839. On the Nuremberg branch see R. Lenman, 'Julius Streicher and the Origins of the NSDAP in Nuremberg, 1918-1923', in A. Nicholls & E. Matthias, (eds.), German Social Democracy and the triumph of Hitler, London, 1971, pp.134 ff..

38) Maser, op. cit., p.228.

39) Beck, op. cit., p.210.

40) Police report, Siegen, 30 November 1923: SAM I PA/398.

41) Beck, op. cit., pp.210-211.

party organisation. Party circulars were generally ignored, especially those which called for regular contributions to the central party fund. The lack of response and co-operation over such financial contributions was lamented in a DSP circular of 1921, in which it was stated that the 'Gau Westphalia has never balanced its accounts and has always only managed insufficient payments. The district organisation of Wanne-Eickel is especially atrocious in this respect.' 42)

Despite the small scale of its efforts in Westphalia, the DSP helped to prepare the way for its völkisch rival and successor the NSDAP. Its importance lay above all in extending völkisch influence into an area which the DVStuTB had generally failed to penetrate - the ranks of the working class. The emphasis on German-völkisch socialism and the concentration on social demands made the DSP a much more likely organisation than the DVStuTB to secure response from the working class for völkisch policies. The local DSP leaders were very conscious of the social structure of the population to which they were appealing and were interested in issuing the right type of propaganda for local consumption. 43) Following the dissolution of the DSP at its last national conference in the autumn of 1922, the bulk of its membership drifted towards the NSDAP. The small Nazi movement of Westphalia received valuable recruits. In Hattingen the dissolution of the DSP led directly to the formation of a NSDAP branch, which was little more at the beginning than a continuation of the old DSP. The branch proved a most valuable addition to Nazi strength, for by the mid-twenties it was to develop into one of the largest and most active groups the party possessed in the province. 44)

42) "Rundschreiben Nr. 5", 10 May 1921: HA 42/839.

43) The Bielefeld branch of the DSP wrote to Streicher asking him to concentrate more on the economic issues, and less on anti-Semitism in his weekly paper 'Deutscher Sozialist'; Carsten, Fascism, op. cit., p.101; Beck notes that the audience at the meeting of the Hattingen branch were mainly working class; Beck, op. cit., p.211.

44) VB, 21 October 1922; Beck, op. cit., pp.210-212.

Other Right-wing Extremist Movements in Westphalia in the early nineteen-twenties.

The DVSuTB and the DSP were not the only manifestations of right-wing extremism in the immediate post-war period. Both movements were important in the subsequent development of the NSDAP, but the Nazis were also assisted by the presence of a large number of influential movements of the Right active in the early nineteen-twenties, the bulk of which were represented in Westphalia. The proliferation of right-wing extremist movements in Germany is one of the striking features of the post-war period. Initially the extreme Right, indeed the German Right in general, were left somewhat breathless by the collapse of German power and the revolution of November 1918. In the course of 1919 and 1920 a large number of extremist groups emerged on the Right to resist the changes which had occurred so dramatically. These organisations rejected the new republic and condemned the whole "system" introduced by the revolution. Collectively, the various organisations of the Right represented a formidable pressure group in the new republic. The weakness of the radical Right lay in its disunity and fragmentation.

In Westphalia the proliferation of right-wing extremist organisations reflected the general developments elsewhere. The bulk of the organisations which filled the province were of national importance, a few had only regional significance. A catalogue of these organisations in Westphalia would have to include, apart from the DVSuTB, the DSP and the NSDAP, such significant organisations as the JdO, Stahlhelm, and Bund Oberland, the less important Orgesch, and the Verein nationalgesinnter Soldaten, and the relatively insignificant Baltikumkämpfer, 'Braver Heydrich', Reichlandsbund, Vereinigung 'Alte Kameraden', Verband ehemaliger Freikorpskämpfer, Wehrwolf, and the Wiking Bund. One would also have to add to this list two very important regional right-wing movements, the WB, and the WTB. Not all the organisations which sprouted up in the immediate post-war period maintained their early radical stance. Two of the largest and most influential movements, the JdO and the Stahlhelm, both of

which were banned in 1922 in Prussia since they were considered 'a danger to the state', went on to play a much more moderate role in later years.

Viewed collectively, the right-wing extremist organisations had certain common features. In the first place, they were all hostile to the new republic, and committed in varying degrees to its destruction. The 'philosophies' of the organisations were the product of resentment and hostility, of a collective "anti-feeling", a mixture of anti-democratic, anti-Semitic, anti-liberal, anti-republican, and anti-marxist sentiments. Secondly, by nature these organisations were non-party, though their outlook drew them towards the parties of the Right ranging from the DNVP to the völkisch extremists. Thirdly, the social composition of these organisations was markedly heterogeneous. This characteristic is very noticeable in the largest of the organisations, the JdO, which was able to cut through the class barriers. A report on the Herford regional branches noted that 'all sections of the population are represented: factory owners, civil servants, white-collar workers, tradespeople, farmers, artisans, and trade union organised workers'. ⁴⁵⁾ Similarly, the 130 members of the Hamm branch of the JdO were drawn 'from all classes: artisans, lawyers, bank officials, white-collar workers employed on the railway, businessmen, shopkeepers, students, miners, workers and other employees'. ⁴⁶⁾ A wide social spectrum was also represented in the WB, though the middle class predominated. ⁴⁷⁾ The Verein nationalgesinnter Soldaten was more middle class in its composition, and distinguished itself, at least in the Dortmund region, by the high percentage of police officers contained within its ranks. ⁴⁸⁾ More sectional in its composition was the WTB, in which members from the farming community predominated. Unlike its chief rival, the WB, it was almost

45) Report by the Landrat, Herford, 6 July 1922: SAD MI IP/569.

46) Police report, Hamm, 19 October 1921; report by the Oberbürgermeister, Hamm, 23 August 1922: SAM I PA/347.

47) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 15 May 1923: SAM I PA/370.

48) In the Dortmund area some 20 per cent of the 240 members were police officers, mostly "junior members of the force"; police report, Dortmund, 10 November 1921: SAM I PA/366.

totally confined to the Regierungsbezirk of Münster. 49)

The material acquired by the authorities on several of the extremist organisations is very patchy. Part of the reason for this was the secretive nature of some of the organisations, such as the Wehrwolf, and the insignificance of some of the others, such as the 'Braver Heydrich' organisation, the Wiking Bund, and the Vereinigung "Alte Kameraden", none of which was able to make much impact on the province. 50) A major problem was the difficulty of penetrating right-wing radical movements, and police spies had to be very cautious and 'take great care' in their attempts to infiltrate the smaller organisations, whose membership was built up on personal recommendations and personal contacts. 51) What made life even more difficult for the police authorities in their attempts to keep the various movements of the Right under observation, was the fact that sections of the police belonged to some of the organisations which they were supposed to be observing. In Gelsenkirchen, the local branch of the 'Verein ehemaliger Baltenkämpfer zur Hebung des Deutschtums', an organisation which had 'strong anti-Semitic tendencies' and which was concerned with 'excluding alien influences', was strongly supported by a section of the local Schutzpolizei. 52) Similarly in Dortmund police officials figured prominently in the local branch of the Verein national-gerisnnter Soldaten, a nationalist, German-völkisch organisation. 53) In the

49) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 16 June 1924: SAM I PA/370.

50) Only two branches of the organisation 'Braver Heydrich' were noted by the authorities of southern Westphalia, and neither of these had more than 'a handful of members' - report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 24 August 1922; report by the Landrat, Iserlohn, 7 August 1922; report by the Landrat, Schwelm, 15 August 1922: SAM I PA/365. There is record of only one branch of the Wiking Bund, that of Siegen, which had some twenty members; report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 20 December 1923: SAD MI IP/570.

The Vereinigung "Alte Kameraden" was a more localised organisation restricted to Rhineland-Westphalia. It brought together former members of the Free Corps raised by Pfeffer von Salomon. Six branches were noted by the authorities: at Bochum, Essen, Elberfeld, Marl, Münster, and Paderborn; report (copy) by Regierungspräsident Düsseldorf, 10 January 1923: SAD MI IP/570.

51) Police report, Dortmund, 23 December 1922: SAM I PA/273.

52) Volkswille, (Gelsenkirchen edition), 1 September 1921; report by the police, Gelsenkirchen, 6 September 1921: SAM I PA/270.

53) Police report, Dortmund, 27 June 1922: SAM I PA/366.

Dortmund region right-wing organisations were virtually free to operate in 1921 and 1922 owing to the protection afforded to them by the higher police officials. In a report compiled by 'lower police officials' which was sent to the Oberpräsident of Westphalia, the complaints against 'their right-wing orientated superiors' stated that 'they are quick to pursue left-wing radicals, but slow up the observation process on right-wing movements by holding back reports on them, or altering and toning them down'. The favourable attitude shown by higher police officials led to developments like the non-enforcement of the Prussian ban on the 'Bund Oberland', because the local police chief did not consider the association a threat to the state and the constitution. 54)

Within the provincial bureaucracy similar right-wing bias was at work. This is to be expected to some degree in view of the few changes which occurred within the civil service apparatus in the post-war period. The bulk of the civil servants paid only lip-service to the republican system. In the early nineteen-twenties some 220 of the 400 Landräte of Prussia were DNVP orientated. 55) This situation raises a question mark as to the reliability of the reports on right-wing extremists made by the Westphalian Landräte. Certainly the great number of negative reports on a variety of right-wing associations which are contained in the files of the regional authorities cannot always be taken as an accurate reflection of the local situation. There is proof from other sources of the existence of quite sizeable branches of certain organisations whose existence must have been known in the localities, but which did not figure in the reports of the Landräte. The fact that many Landräte, even after the ban of certain organisations, reported that they did not regard them as right-wing radical movements, underlines doubts about the reliability of the reports. 56)

Apart from the problem of gathering reliable and adequate information,

54) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 15 July 1922: SAM I PA/382.

55) Lambers, op. cit., p.185.

56) See, for example, the reports by the Landrat, Meschede, 1 March 1924; and Landrat, Siegen, 4 March 1924 (on Jd0): SAM I PA/387.

the authorities of the province were faced with the difficulty of enforcing a series of bans on several extremist movements of the Right. These bans more often than not proved futile. The greatest difficulty was provided by the piecemeal nature of the prohibitions. These affected a number of organisations in 1921 and 1922, but not all of the right-wing groups at the same time. Since the members of one extremist organisation tended also to be active in several allied movements, the problem of right-wing agitation and subversion was not solved effectively. The membership of one banned organisation merely continued its existence within the framework of another, still legally operating right-wing movement. Thus in Dortmund the ban on the Verein nationalgesinnter Soldaten and the JdO led to the expansion of the local branch of the WTB. 57) The dissolution of the DVSuTB and the Bund Oberland in the town merely swelled the membership of the WB, with two leading officials of the Bund Oberland, and one of the leading lights of the local DVSuTB, re-appearing in the branch committee of their new "home". 58) A similar pattern also unfolded in other areas of the province. 59) Another expedient used by prohibited organisations was to dissolve the local branches and re-enrol the members individually with the national central organisation. 60) Some branches of prohibited organisations simply ignored the ban and continued to meet privately, while others pleaded ignorance when the police finally caught up with them. 61) The authorities had no illusions about their lack

57) Police report, Dortmund, 27 October 1922: SAM I PA/347.

58) Police report, Dortmund, 19 July 1922: SAM I PA/347.

59) For example: "Verein ehemaliger Baltikumer" into "Verein nationalgesinnter Soldaten"; police report, Bochum, 15 August 1921: SAM I PA/366. Stahlhelm into "Verein nationalgesinnter Soldaten"; police report, Bochum, 8 August 1922: SAM I PA/372. Orgesch into JdO; police report, Hamm, 27 October 1921: SAM I PA/367. Orgesch into WB; report by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 10 October 1921: SAM I PA/367.

60) In Dortmund the membership of the Bund Oberland enrolled themselves in the Munich branch and continued to function as a unit on the local level; police report, Dortmund, 25 September 1922: SAM I PA/382.

61) Police report on the JdO, Dortmund, 25 September 1922: SAM I PA/347. Report by the Oberpräsident on Orgesch, Münster, 10 October 1921: SAM I PA/367. The Westig branch of the Bund Oberland (banned on 24 November 1921) was still in existence in August 1922. When confronted by the police the members stated "that none of them were aware of the ban of their organisation!"; police report, Hagen, 14 August 1922: SAM I PA/382.

of success in curbing the radical Right (or the Left, for that matter) and feared that at most they would succeed in driving the organisations underground, with 'the inner core of the prohibited organisations continuing to exist'. (62)

By far the largest and most successful of any of the diverse right-wing movements active in Westphalia in the early nineteen-twenties was the JdO, which penetrated to all parts of the province. Almost complete data concerning the movement in its formative years are provided by the information gathered in the Regierungsbezirk of Minden. (63) By the time the JdO was banned in August 1922, the organisation had some 58 branches, 47 of which lay in the predominantly Protestant counties of the north and north-east. The total membership recorded for 49 branches, inclusive of 'estimates', gives the minimum figure of 3,764, and a maximum membership of 3,881. The JdO also had large branches elsewhere in the province. In Dortmund, where the movement had strong connections with the DVSTB, Stahlhelm, Verein nationalgesinnter Soldaten and the DNVP, the local branch contained some 400 to 500 members. (64) In County Arnsberg the organisation also had 'a sizeable membership', with several 'strong and active branches' throughout the county. (65) Both Werdohl and Lippstadt had branches in which the membership number exceeded the 100 mark. (66) The total membership of the JdO in Westphalia probably exceeded 10,000.

The strength of the JdO indicates the degree to which a right-wing radical appeal could generate response. The movement was to secure even greater support following the ban imposed on it in Prussia (from August 1922 to January 1923). This pattern of development was also shown by another extra-parliamentary right-wing pressure group, the Stahlhelm. This organisation was

62) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 21 September 1922: SAD MI IP/621.

63) See the numerous reports by the Landräte and police authorities for 1921 and 1922: SAD MI IP/617.

64) Police reports, Dortmund, 8 July and 25 September 1922: SAM I PA/347.

65) Report by the Landrat, Arnsberg, 20 October 1921: SAM I PA/347.

66) Police report, Werdohl, 18 August 1922; police report, Lippstadt, 15 August 1922: SAM I PA/347.

subjected to a ban lasting from June 1922 to January 1923. Westphalia was one of the few provinces in Germany in which the organisation had been able to make some progress before the ban temporarily halted its growth. 67) Despite the assistance given to the Stahlhelm by the JdO, the former movement was by far the weaker of the two in the pre-1923 period. 68) By the time of its dissolution, the Stahlhelm had only a handful of branches in southern Westphalia, none of which had a significant membership. 69) The organisation was to expand rapidly in 1923 and 1924 to become the largest right-wing paramilitary pressure group active in the province. 70)

Two organisations of regional significance were also part of the Westphalian national-völkisch movement, the WB and the WTB. The former covered the whole of the province and adjacent regions, especially Lippe-Detmold and Schaumburg-Lippe, while the latter was restricted almost totally to the Regierungsbezirk of Münster. The origins of both organisations are tied up with the ban on the Orgesch movement, the first branches of both the WB and the WTB being little more than continuations of the Escherich organisation. 71) During the period 1920-1924 both organisations played a crucial role in the organisation of 'German-völkisch and German-nationalist' support in the region. 72) Since both organisations were permanent features of the regional völkisch movement and were never subjected to any bans, they provided a useful refuge

67) V.R. Berghahn, Der Stahlhelm. Bund der Frontsoldaten 1918-1935, Düsseldorf, 1966, p.30.

68) The two organisations held joint meetings and emphasized their similarity of aim and purpose; see police report, Iserlohn, 1 July 1922: SAM I PA/347.

69) Meldestelle, Arnsberg, 24 August 1922; Police report, Bochum, 8 August 1922; Police report, Witten, 29 July 1922: SAM I PA/372. No data available for northern Westphalia in the pre-1923 period.

70) By 1925 Stahlhelm branches with a membership of between 250 and 500 were quite common; the province was well covered by the organisation; numerous reports contained in file SAM I PA/372.

71) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 10 October 1921: SAM I PA/367; police report, Münster, 4 June 1924: SAM I PA/370. The Orgesch had established a strong presence in Rhineland-Westphalia in 1920, with a total membership estimated at 8,000 to 10,000; police report, Bochum, 19 August 1920: SAM I PA/364. On the Orgesch see Fenske, op. cit., pp.108 ff..

72) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 16 June 1924: SAM I PA/370.

for the membership of a variety of proscribed organisations. 73) The völkisch inclinations of the WB and the WTB were camouflaged behind the fairly innocuous statutes on which the organisations were based. The statutes of the WB stated that its purpose was the 'cultivation of Westphalian virtues, the encouragement of Low German, the study of local history, old habits and folklore'. Further aims were 'the spiritual and economic regeneration of the German Volk, the cultivation of "Heimatliebe" and love for the great German Fatherland, and the revival of the physical, spiritual and moral strength of the German Volk, especially through the education of the German youth'. 74) Beyond these aims, the WB also pursued a number of political objectives, advocating above all the 'strengthening of the authority of the State', and 'fighting Bolshevism, Internationalism and the concept of class-war'. 75) The programme and objectives of the WTB were almost identical.

The importance of the right-wing radical organisations must be seen in the short and long term perspective. Collectively, the various movements demonstrate the degree of response right-wing radicalism generated in the province. Since none of the organisations had a 'political' function as such, the politically committed elements within them had little choice in the immediate post-war period except to support the DNVP, and to a lesser degree, the DVP. With the emergence of the NSDAP and the DVFP, and their emphasis on völkisch ideals and values, the existing right-wing pressure groups provided favourable recruiting ground. The fact that the völkisch parties could look to this support made their establishment much easier. The ground on which they could flourish was already prepared. The immediate problem was not one of creating support, but engaging and organising the available human material.

73) For example, the committee of the Dortmund branch of the WB contained two well-known members of the Bund Oberland, and one former leader of the banned DVStTB; police report, Dortmund, 19 August 1922: SAM I PA/379.

74) "Satzungen des Westfalenbundes"; copy in file SAM I PA/370.

75) Report by the Landrat, Meschede, 29 September 1924: SAM I PA/370.

The early history of the Westphalian NSDAP demonstrates how much support was given to the party by existing German-völkisch movements. The first Westphalian branch, established in Dortmund, secured considerable backing from supporters of the Bund Oberland, DVSuTB, Verband nationalgesinnter Soldaten, and the JdO. 76) Regional leaders of various organisations moved towards the NSDAP from 1922, a development which must have influenced the rank and file to do likewise. An early convert was the Westphalian leader of the Bund Oberland, Franz Burckert, who was agitating for the Nazi movement by 1923. 77) Another active supporter of the völkisch cause was the well-known Free Corps leader Pfeffer von Salomon, who ultimately declared for Hitler in 1925 following the break-up of the NSFB. 78) For the Nazi cause the support of von Pfeffer was extremely valuable since he had built up important connections in the early nineteen-twenties with a variety of paramilitary right-wing associations connected with the Free Corps movement. 79)

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- 76) Police reports, Dortmund, 19 July 1922: SAM I PA/382; 23 April 1923: SAM I PA/370.
- 77) The Bund Oberland was especially strong in the towns of the Ruhr, where the bulk of its branches were situated; report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 14 November 1921: SAM I PA/382. The organisation controlled a sizeable administrative set-up in the province composed of a 'military' and a 'political' leader, several military instructors, an ordnance sergeant, and several 'assistants', backed by sufficient financial support used primarily to purchase weaponry. See police report, Dortmund, 19 July 1922: SAM I PA/382. The leader of the organisation, Burckert, had joined a Free Corps recruited in Minden after the revolution and had taken part in the fighting in Upper Silesia as a member of the Free Corps Oberland; police report, Iserlohn, 3 December 1921: SAM I PA/382.
- 78) Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, born 1888; preferred to call himself von Pfeffer since he thought that his name sounded too Jewish; a captain in the army. After the war he formed a Free Corps in Westphalia; participated in the Baltic conflicts against the Poles; joined the Kapp affair. First met Hitler in Berlin during the Kapp Putsch. Later active in sabotage actions in the Ruhr. Became leader of the V-S-B; joined the NSDAP after Hitler's release; party number 16,101. Gauleiter of Westphalia March 1925 to 27 March 1926; then Gauleiter (with Kaufmann and Goebbels) of Gau Ruhr (to 20 June 1926). Became Oberster SA-Führer 1 November 1926; held post to 29 August 1930; resigned after dispute with Hitler. Also Leiter des Jugendausschusses November 1926 to 11 June 1930.
- 79) Von Pfeffer was honorary chairman of the Vereinigung "Alte Kameraden" composed of ex-Free Corps members. The members of von Pfeffer's Free Corps were also active in the Verband ehemaliger Freikorpskämpfer, which emerged from the Baltikumkämpfer; the organisation also had contacts with the Verband nationalgesinnter Soldaten; see report (copy) by the Regierungspräsident, Düsseldorf, 10 January 1923: SAD MI IP/570; police report, Bochum, 27 June 1921: SAM I PA/366; police report, Bochum, 17 February 1922: SAM I PA/379.

The leader of the Bund Wiking in Rhineland-Westphalia, Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz, also joined the NSDAP after a short stay in the Stahlhelm, towards the end of 1925. 80)

The Emergence of the NSDAP

The presence of the NSDAP in Westphalia can be traced back to the surprisingly early date of 1920, though the movement was of little significance in the early period and was very much on the periphery of right-wing politics until well into the nineteen-twenties. The history of the Westphalian NSDAP between 1920 and 1923 cannot be used to challenge the view that until 1923 the Hitler movement was really only a Bavarian phenomenon. 81) Indeed, the weakness of Nazism in the province in the early 'twenties was clear to all contemporary observers. In the official party account the early period of the "Kampfzeit" is projected as the history of a few small and isolated groups struggling to exist in a very hostile environment. 82)

The first branch in the province, indeed the first branch established outside Bavaria, was formed in Dortmund in 1920. 83) The date of the formation of the branch is given as 5 July 1920 in the Munich Party Diary for 1920/1921. 84) But there is reference to the existence of the branch before this date. According to a Dortmund membership list the branch had an enrolled strength of 23 by 1 May 1920. 85) Of the early history of the branch little

80) K. Finker, 'Bund Wiking (BW) 1923-1928', in Die Bürgerlichen Parteien in Deutschland, op. cit., p.190.

81) Franz-Willing, op. cit., p.258. The Nazi membership of the pre-Putsch party in 'Northern Germany' was not, however, as insignificant as the standard accounts would have us believe. The available statistics show that some 18.4 per cent of the Nazi membership was resident in 'Northern Germany'. See M.H. Kater, 'Zur Soziographie der frühen NSDAP', Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 19, 1971, p.137.

82) "The National Socialist Movement in Westphalia-South was hardly known before the 9 November 1923"; Beck, op. cit., p.42; further p.522.

83) Maser, op. cit., p.315. The founding of the Dortmund branch disputes Farquharson's assertion that the Hanover branch, founded on 2 July 1921, was "the first in North Germany proper". See J. Farquharson, 'The NSDAP in Hanover and Lower Saxony 1921-26', The Journal of Contemporary History, 8, 1973, p.105.

84) Maser, op. cit., p.237.

85) Beck, op. cit., p.301.

is known. The branch leader was a post-office clerk called Ohnesorge, who was to make a name for himself in local Nazi circles by asserting that he was a personal friend of Hitler.⁸⁶⁾ There was some contact with Munich. Esser addressed the branch in the spring of 1920.⁸⁷⁾ The Munich party centre also met the costs of the production of local propaganda material.⁸⁸⁾ Ohnesorge corresponded with Munich and was a recipient of the early party circulars.⁸⁹⁾

Until 1922 the Dortmund group was the only Westphalian outpost of the National Socialist movement. From the spring of that year the NSDAP made a more significant impact on the province, with the appearance of several branches of some numerical strength and political significance. The expansion of the NSDAP coincided with a renewed direct involvement in the province by the Munich party centre. Esser re-appeared in Rhineland-Westphalia in the spring of 1922, ostensibly to collect 'information on the occupied region'.⁹⁰⁾ He spoke at meetings in Dortmund and Hagen, and was present at the formation of the second branch established in the province, that of Hagen. Both branches were relatively small, with around one hundred members in Dortmund and some forty-five in Hagen.⁹¹⁾ In the months following the Nazi movement made significant progress in both these towns and began to extend its activities in the surrounding region, an effort which did not escape the attention of the Westphalian authorities, who became more interested in the movement. In the first expansionist phase the party was often mistaken for the DSP, one report referring to Brunner as the party leader and to Berlin as the headquarters of the NSDAP.⁹²⁾ In March 1922 a new branch was established in Wanne-Eickel, which grew rapidly to 120 paid-up members by May, good connections

86) Police report, Dortmund, 15 March 1923: SAM I PA/370.

87) Beck, op. cit., p.301.

88) Maser, op. cit., p.236.

89) Ohnesorge to Munich, Dortmund, 3 March 1922; Hitler to OG Dortmund, Munich, 6 March 1922: HA 8/165.

90) VE, 8 March 1922.

91) Ibid.

92) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 13 April 1922: SAM I PA/398.

with the Verein Heimattreuer Ost- und Westpreussen und Oberschlesier providing scope for further expansion. ⁹³⁾ At about the same time, a branch was also established in Bochum; this was relatively weak and failed to make any impact on the town by the summer of 1922. ⁹⁴⁾

As regards the foundation of party branches, it is evident that Hitler himself was not very interested in seeing the proliferation of their number, and generally counselled caution to those who approached him on this matter in the pre-putsch period. 'The party leadership', he informed his supporters, 'has in the immediate future no interest in the possibility of founding many branches, though it is very interested in very good ones'. ⁹⁵⁾ Hitler was aware of the strain of running small ineffective party cells, which were more of a handicap than an asset to the movement. Newly established branches were often tempted to exert their influence for the "cause" in the neighbouring towns, and more often than not wasted valuable time and cash in futile efforts to spread the creed at a time when the chief local branch was barely viable itself. Hagen learned this lesson fairly rapidly. In the spring of 1922 much attention was given by the branch to creating a party branch in nearby Lüdenscheid. The net result of a prolonged campaign was that several workers of the town joined the party' but these were not enough to sustain an independent branch. ⁹⁶⁾ In contrast to the limited progress the Hagen branch achieved in the surrounding district, the branch itself grew rapidly and developed a rudimentary organisational framework on which to build. By May 1922 it had 304 enrolled members, drawn from working and middle class circles, skilled workers and office employees predominating. ⁹⁷⁾ The attention and

⁹³⁾ Report by the Police President, Gelsenkirchen, 10 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

⁹⁴⁾ Police report, Bochum, 4 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

⁹⁵⁾ Maser cites the "Mitteilungsblatt Nr. 4", 26 August 1922; Maser, op. cit., p.316. See also Hitler's letter to Gustav Seifert, 6 September 1921, reprinted in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.37-38. The Nazi leaders of the Hanover area appear to have ignored the advice offered by Munich headquarters - see Farquharson, op. cit., p.108.

⁹⁶⁾ Police report, Hagen, 13 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

⁹⁷⁾ Police report, Hagen, 1 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

interest of the population was also increasing. At a meeting in April 1922 at which Esser was again the main attraction, the movement was able to draw an audience of some 600. ⁹⁸⁾ The branch was controlled and directed by the elected leader Wachenfeld, who headed a small governing committee. This included a secretary, two treasurers, and a propaganda group of five, all of whom were elected democratically by the branch membership. There was also a group of volunteers responsible for protecting local party meetings. This group was of vital importance because of the increasing attention being paid to the movement by the Left, especially the KPD. ⁹⁹⁾ To some degree this attention was invited by the style of propaganda developed by the branch. A pamphlet distributed in the spring of 1922, entitled "Arnim - German-völkisch broadsheet and 'Kampfblatt' of the German Workers' Party Hagen/Westfalen" explained at great length that the National Socialists of the town were prepared to meet the violence of the Left with even greater violence. This type of provocation was designed to bring out the activists. In order to make this threat of force more meaningful the branch organised a "Storm Troop" of 25 volunteers in order to fight the "socialist big-mouths". The branch also made its presence felt by the tactic of interrupting the meetings of other parties in Hagen and district, as well as by distributing leaflets and daubing swastikas on Jewish shops and houses. ¹⁰⁰⁾

The rapid growth of the Hagen branch outstripped that of the older centre Dortmund, which was also increasing in size but failed to sustain its impetus. Membership figures given by the police reflect an initial upward swing and then a decline: May - 200 members; July - 250; September - 140. ¹⁰¹⁾ The reason for the decline may well have been internal strife among the party leadership. In May 1922 seven of the eight members of the party committee were, like the branch leader Ohnesorge, post-office employees with white collar occupations,

⁹⁸⁾ Police report, Hagen, 30 April 1922: SAM I PA/398.

⁹⁹⁾ Police report, Hagen, 15 July 1922: SAM I PA/398.

¹⁰⁰⁾ Lambers, op. cit., p.165.

¹⁰¹⁾ Police reports, Dortmund, 10 May 1922; 12 July 1922; 22 September 1922: SAM I PA/398.

the exception being a miner from the suburb of Westerfilde. ¹⁰²⁾ This committee resigned in August and was replaced by one in which working class members had a majority; not one of the old members, not even Ohnesorge, retained their seats. ¹⁰³⁾ The radical transformation of the party leadership undoubtedly reflected a large influx of working class members into the party, which may have led to a withdrawal of a section of the petit-bourgeois element from the branch. The composition of the branch leadership in the post-August period generally reflected the guidelines laid down by party headquarters, though it is debatable whether this influenced the change. ¹⁰⁴⁾

In the Dortmund and Hagen region the NSDAP was able to attract significant working class support. In the two branches established near Dortmund in 1922, miners figured prominently in the membership. The Westerfilde branch, with its dozen or so members at the time of its formation, was composed of and led by miners. ¹⁰⁵⁾ In the Mengede branch miners also provided a sizeable proportion of the membership, though here there were also elements drawn from the farming community and the petit-bourgeoisie. ¹⁰⁶⁾ The fragmentary evidence available suggests that the social structure of the Westphalian branches of the NSDAP was relatively broad, with a significant percentage of working class members. The data are insufficient and impossible to quantify, however, and can only be used as a very general indication. ¹⁰⁷⁾

The ban of the NSDAP in Prussia on 15 November 1922 halted the gradual, undramatic, expansion of the movement in Westphalia. The ban came, from the Nazi point of view, at a particularly unfortunate moment in that it interrupted

102) Police report, Dortmund, 10 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

103) Police report, Dortmund, 22 September 1922: SAM I PA/398.

104) The "Instructions for the Formation of Party Branches" of 1922 suggested that great care should be taken to see that the social composition of the branch leadership should reflect that of the membership. Ideally 2/3 of the committee should consist of workers; Tyrell, op. cit., p.39.

105) Report by the Landrat, Dortmund, 9 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

106) Völkischer Beobachter, 17 June 1922; further, Graf, op. cit., pp.35-36.

107) On the social composition of the early NSDAP see Kater, op. cit., pp. 124 ff..

the drift of membership from a variety of völkisch and right-wing organisations into the Nazi ranks. The NSDAP was in a particularly fortunate position in the autumn of 1922 due to the dissolution of a variety of right-wing organisations by the Prussian Minister of the Interior following the assassination of Rathenau in June. The banned organisations, including the DVStTB, the Verband nationalgesinnter Soldaten, and the Stahlhelm, had sizeable memberships looking for new homes, and the NSDAP provided one refuge. This "catchment function" of the NSDAP came to an end when it too was banned. The danger which the ban represented to the National Socialist cause was made more acute because shortly after the ban there emerged a new völkisch movement which filled the vacuum caused by the widespread prohibition of numerous right-wing extremist movements, namely the DVFP. This racist movement was formed in December 1922 by dissident members of the DNVP headed by von Graefe and Wulle, who were disenchanted with the moderation of the party over the Jewish issue. 108) The DVFP was to prove itself a major competitor to the NSDAP until the mid-twenties, especially in Northern Germany, where the NSDAP was comparatively weak. The appearance of the DVFP at a time when the National Socialists could no longer operate in public represented a major threat to the latter. A big handicap undoubtedly was the fact that the NSDAP had been in existence too briefly to hold its members via the strength of its organisation. There was no regional organisation and little on the local level. Even the oldest branch, Dortmund, was run on an ad hoc basis by the branch leader. The branch lacked even simple office facilities. 109)

The NSDAP encountered much opposition in the initial period of penetration

108) L. Hertzmann, op. cit., pp.157-158.

109) Police report, Dortmund, 10 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

in the province. 110) The most vigorous reaction came from the SPD and KPD, whose supporters were prepared to use strong-arm tactics to prevent the public appearance of National Socialists. The meetings organised by the NSDAP were often broken up, or degenerated into brawls. Only the larger branches were able to resist the tactics of the Left and establish their right to exist. In towns where the National Socialists were of little importance, and that meant the majority, the establishment of a foothold was made difficult by the Left which prevented the Nazis from making a public appearance. Even small established branches found it impossible to use public meetings as a means of increasing membership. The Westerfelde branch discovered this rather rapidly. Its first public meeting was 'dispersed by Communists. From that time nothing has been noted of any propaganda activity by the (NS)Party.' 111) The second meeting at which Esser spoke in Hagen also ended in a brawl between National Socialists and Communists; the "Stormtroop Pfeffer" used revolvers and truncheons to threaten the Communists before the police intervened to restore order. 112) The near-riot created by the affair rebounded on the NSDAP. A meeting planned for November 1922, at which Esser was again to be the main speaker, was prevented from being held by the police authorities on the grounds that it would lead to public disorder. The police report pointed out that 'the KPD and Trade Union members have already made it clear that

110) A report in the VB, 8 March 1922, lists the problems facing the party in Westphalia, though inevitably in an exaggerated form: "Man darf freilich nicht vergessen, dass die Schwierigkeiten die sich dieser volksbefreienden Bewegung in diesen Gebieten entgegenstellen, umgleich grösser sind als im übrigen Deutschland. Man hat hier ausser gegen die Dummheit und Verbohrtheit verführter Volksgenossen auch hier und da gegen die Stiernackigkeit halbverblödeter und verbrecherisch kurzsichtiger Regierungsbonzen zu kämpfen, so gesellte sich dort zu all diesem noch die teuflische sadistische Brutalität der Besatzungsbehörden, und ausserdem noch ein Terror von seiten einer mit fanatisch deutschfeindlichen Polacken durchgesetzten, von jüdischen Hetzteufeln aufgepeitschten Fabrikarbeiterschaft, wie er nicht oft zu finden ist."

111) Report by the Landrat, Dortmund, 9 May 1922: SAM I PA/398.

112) Police report, Hagen, 30 April 1922: SAM I PA/398. Further Lambers, op. cit., p.165.

they would not tolerate National Socialist activities. Furthermore, large sections of the community are also disturbed by the movement. Letters from the Zentralverein Deutscher Staatsangehöriger jüdischen Glaubens and from the chairman of the republican Teachers Union also protested against the proposed meeting. 113)

Left-wing hostility did much to limit the effectiveness of the NSDAP groups emerging in the early nineteen-twenties. The Nazis were too weak numerically and too poorly organised to overcome the opposition. The co-operation between branches, established in the post-1925 period, was absent in the early years of the movement, except in the Dortmund-Hagen area where each branch swelled the ranks of the other's meetings. Finance was also a serious problem. Lack of cash restricted the scope of operation of all the branches. Dortmund, for example, depended very much on the Munich party centre for financial help and the provision of necessary propaganda material. 114) Taken together, these many difficulties made it very hard for the movement to reach the mass of the population. The propaganda effort to "spread the message" was also somewhat unimaginative compared to that of later years. It consisted mainly of street distributions of pamphlets printed in Munich. The pamphlets generally contained the programme of the party, but some were little more than anti-Semitic tracts reminiscent of those of the DVSuTB. 115) The emphasis on anti-Semitism at the party meetings was hardly calculated to attract new members beyond the "faithful" previously organised in other völkisch circles. What was needed to trigger off interest in the majority of the population, especially in the industrial centres, was a greater emphasis on social issues. A stream of stereotyped anti-Jewish propaganda was too negative to achieve very much. It only made the movement

113) Police report, Dortmund, 17 November 1922: SAM I PA/398.

114) Police report, Dortmund, 22 September 1922: SAM I PA/398.

115) Examples of these contained in Folder SAM I PA/398.

vulnerable to charges of representing little more than 'stupid anti-Semitism'.¹¹⁶⁾

The Development of the Party from the time of the Prussian Ban to the November Putsch: November 1922 to November 1923.

The ban of the NSDAP in Prussia halted the organisational and propaganda activity of the movement and stunted its progress. The fortune of the party rested more than ever on the ingenuity of branch leaders to keep the cause alive, and a variety of subterfuges were used to get round the ban and diminish its effectiveness. In Hagen the movement was continued by Wachenfeld in the form of a reading society of the VB, the "Lesegesellschaft zur Pflege des Antisemitismus und zur Gewinnung von Lesern für den VB", until this too was banned in March 1923. The resultant prosecution of Wachenfeld for continuing an illegal organisation failed.¹¹⁷⁾ Wachenfeld refused to accept defeat and formed an "Antisemitenbund". This was little more than yet another continuation of the old Nazi branch, but was allowed to exist, even though the police authorities had sufficient evidence to prove that a large number of Nazis were members of the League. Prosecution failed because anti-Semitism was not unlawful in the Weimar state!¹¹⁸⁾

The Dortmund branch also continued to be active, with the old leader, Ohnesorge, back in command. It was his effort which gave life to the illegal group under his control, which he exhorted 'to pursue a ruthless recruitment campaign'. Working class members were picked out to canvass support among their fellow workers.¹¹⁹⁾ In several towns of the province individuals recently attracted to the movement were undeterred by the ban and continued

116) This was a constant criticism levied against the party (with justification!). Wachenfeld attempted to defend the party line by stating that "unser Antisemitismus ist genau so beschaffen, wie er von massgebenden Vertretern der Katholischen Kirche vertreten wird; z.B. bei Kardinal Faulhaber in "Sonntagsblatt für das katholische Volk 'Leo' in Paderborn", Nr. 8, 22 February 1920" - Wachenfeld in a letter to the editor of the Westdeutsche Volkszeitung, 23 November 1922: Copy in file SAM I PA/347.

117) Police report, Hagen, 27 March 1923; report by the Hauptmeldestelle, Hagen, 12 June 1923: SAM I PA/398.

118) Police report, Hagen, 11 January 1924: SAM I PA/398. Lambers, op. cit., p.184.

119) Police report, Dortmund, 15 March 1923: SAM I PA/370.

to advocate the Nazi cause, the more adventurous founding new branches. In Minden the ban of the party coincided with an attempt by a member of the DNV, Adolf Manns, to establish a party branch some fifty strong. A "Manns Sektion" was formed instead, whose members joined the Munich headquarters on an individual basis and thus got round the ban. ¹²⁰⁾ Manns became very active on behalf of the NSDAP in the town, distributing Nazi propaganda and party application forms of the Munich branch. ¹²¹⁾ Another person to emerge at the time of the ban, who was to be associated with the Nazi cause throughout the nineteen-twenties and early nineteen-thirties, was a Catholic priest, Dr Lorenz Pieper, who organised an illegal branch in Hsten, County Arnsberg. ¹²²⁾ Pieper achieved temporary notoriety in Hsten by advocating the Nazi and vlkisch cause from the pulpit, and by using the church for hanging out placards to announce vlkisch meetings. Pieper, a former leader of the DVSuTB in Neheim-Hsten, organised the first Nazi meeting in the town, at which a well-known Nazi agitator from Dortmund was the main attraction. The man concerned, Knig, a former member of the KPD, launched forth for two hours against the Jews, national political figures, and the "system", leaving the bulk of the audience speechless with the violence of his language. ¹²³⁾

The individual efforts on behalf of the NSDAP were too localised, isolated and infrequent to cause more than a temporary ripple here and there. The dependence of the movement on a few committed people was no substitute for organised, active branches. It only needed the removal of a major activist from a locality to cause the collapse of the local effort. ¹²⁴⁾ The ban also

120) Report by the Landrat, Minden, 24 March 1923: SAD MI IP/570.

121) Police report, Minden, 22 March 1923: SAD MI IP/570.

122) Report by the Landrat, Arnsberg, 7 April 1923: SAM I PA/370.

123) Police report, Hsten, 20 February 1923: SAM I PA/347. Accounts of the meeting and the subsequent uproar in the Hstener Anzeiger, 21 February 1923; Zentral-Volksblatt, 24 February 1923; Ruhr und Mhne Zeitung, 28 February 1923.

124) A good example is provided by the developments in Hsten. Here the removal of Pieper by the church authorities (he was transferred to Bavaria) finished off the local Nazi effort, and no further activity was observed by the police; police report, Hsten, 21 April 1923: SAM I PA/347.

left the door open for other right-wing extremist groups unaffected by the restrictions imposed on the Nazis, though often these too led but a short public life. One such temporary refuge, in which some Nazis found a new home, was provided by the GDAP. This was founded by Rossbach some time in November 1922 and had a programme identical to that of the NSDAP. It appeared only briefly, being banned in Prussia, on 10 January 1923, before it could really get off the ground. 125) The initiative for the development of this organisation in Westphalia lay in Hagen, where a branch was established before the GDAP was banned. Although a report by the Oberpräsident of Westphalia noted that 'the GDAP had established branches in almost all the larger towns of the industrial region', this view is not corroborated by the reports of local authorities, which do not mention any branches apart from that at Hagen. The Oberpräsident's report also mentions that 'the membership of the GDAP in Rhineland-Westphalia is estimated by informed sources as 25,000', which seems exaggerated to say the least. 126) More successful in organising völkisch support was the DVFP, which quickly established several branches throughout Westphalia, especially in the Regierungsbezirke of Arnsberg and Minden. But this movement too was subjected to a ban by the end of March 1923 before it could entrench itself. 127)

In the spring of 1923 the völkisch movement was in considerable disarray as a result of the suppression of the various organisations by the Prussian Ministry of the Interior. The NSDAP as a distinct movement no longer existed, and the promising developments of 1922 had collapsed. Yet at a time during which it became virtually impossible to organise right-wing extremists into

125) On the GDAP see Noakes, op. cit., p.31. The party was also the object of a circular to the Oberpräsident of Westphalia issued by the Staatskommissar für Öffentliche Ordnung, Berlin, 12 February 1923; copy of this in file SAM I PA/370.

126) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 14 March 1923; SAD MI IP/570. There is reference to the Hagen branch attempting to establish a branch in Hülsten in a report by the Amtmann, Hülsten, 26 January 1923: SAM I PA/347.

127) Reports on DVFP branches in SAM I PA/370 and I PA/398; also in SAD MI IP/570.

political parties, the völkisch elements of the region were given a new lease of life and a renewed incentive to continue as a consequence of the invasion of the Ruhr by the French and Belgians in January 1923. ¹²⁸⁾ To the activist right-wing circles it was a heaven-sent opportunity to justify their existence through "patriotic" action. The immediate consequence of the occupation was a rapid growth of the membership of right-wing organisations. ¹²⁹⁾ The government's call for "passive resistance" was almost immediately replaced by a campaign of "active resistance" involving sabotage and underground activities. The Nazi elements in the province were rapidly drawn into this movement, despite Hitler's objections to such participation, and his threat to exclude any National Socialist who took part. ¹³⁰⁾ For the local Nazi groups it would have been political suicide to have adopted Hitler's posture. The immediate consequence of Hitler's line of "Down with the November Traitors rather than the French" which went down very badly in the Ruhr region, was that the numerous right-wing groups in the Ruhr area distanced themselves from the National Socialists. ¹³¹⁾ The Westphalian Nazis, however, simply ignored the Munich party attitude and involved themselves in the Ruhr campaign alongside the various para-military and völkisch organisations, strengthening their ties with these as a consequence. Whatever authority Hitler may have had over the Bavarian Nazi movement, the NSDAP was at this time by no means so monolithic as it later became, and Hitler's influence in Westphalia was too limited to enable him to enforce his concepts on the scattered Nazi

128) The occupation and reaction to it in Rhineland-Westphalia has been analysed by K. Pabst, 'Der Ruhrkampf', in (Hrsg.) W. Först, op. cit., pp.11 ff..

129) "Rundschreiben, Staatskommissar für öffentliche Ordnung", Berlin, 3 March 1923; copy in file SAM I PA/370.

130) For Hitler's attitude see Horn, op. cit., pp.101 ff.; Maser, op. cit., pp.367 ff..

131) "Lagebericht", 12 February 1923: SAM I PA/274.

elements. 132)

Ultimately the involvement of Rhenish-Westphalian Nazis in the "active resistance" received Hitler's blessing and encouragement. The Westphalian Nazis derived considerable advantages from their participation in the guerilla warfare waged by the Right against the occupation troops. 133) The nationalistic posture adopted by the Westphalian National Socialists attracted above all the petit-bourgeoisie which was disappointed by the lack of positive action by the government. 134) In the spring and summer of 1923, collaboration by the Nazis with a variety of right-wing extremist groups also strengthened their contact with a large reservoir of potential support. Not least in importance, the participation of the Nazis in the active resistance provided the regional, and national, movement with its first "hero", Albert Leo Schlageter, who was to figure prominently in the propaganda of the NSDAP in the Weimar era, and especially in the mythology of the Third Reich. 135) One immediate consequence of Schlageter's execution was the formation of a number of organisations "commemorating" the fallen hero. Many of these organisations

- 132) Hitler's lack of authority in the formative years of the NSDAP is noted by Krebs: "Gewiss haben vor allem beim Ruhrkampf die dortigen NS-Gruppen tatkräftig mitgewirkt und dabei manche Opfer gebracht. Doch sie taten es nicht etwa deshalb, weil sie einen Geheimbefehl Hitlers in Händen gehabt hätten, mit der er seine offizielle Stellungnahme widerrufen hätte sondern weil sie sich um diese Stellungnahme nicht kümmerten. Die Autorität Hitlers in jener Frühzeit war noch zu gering, als dass er den sehr eigenwilligen ersten Anhängern hätte befehlen oder verbieten können, was nicht deren eigener Meinung entsprach". A. Krebs, Tendenzen und Gestalten der NSDAP. Erinnerungen an die Frühzeit der Partei, Stuttgart, 1959, p.122. Even in Bavaria Hitler's authority was not automatically recognised; see Lenman, op. cit., pp.145 ff..
- 133) "Active resistance" involved indiscriminate bombings, assassinations of French and Belgian troops, the destruction of bridges, railway equipment etc.; see Pabst, op. cit., pp.24-30.
- 134) "Lagebericht", 25 February 1923: SAM I PA/274.
- 135) Schlageter was "claimed" by several right-wing extremist groups, including the NSDAP. A typical example of the type of young terrorist involved in the resistance: A 'perpetual soldier' insignificant until his death. Schlageter had been a volunteer in the war, and at the end of the war joined a Free Corps which saw action in the Baltic and in Upper Silesia. In 1922 he allegedly joined the NSDAP. He was executed by the French on 26 May 1923 for his participation in a failed attempt to dynamite the Duisburg-Düsseldorf railway line near Kalkum.

ultimately joined the NSDAP. 136)

Hagen, lying on the edge of the occupation zone, with good communications to the rest of Germany, became the centre from which sabotage activities were organised. It was here that interested parties made contact. 137) It became the centre of activity for the "active resistance movement" with couriers to and from other parts of Germany, especially Munich, establishing contact with various right-wing groups in the town. Active above all were representatives of the Bund Oberland. The main agent for the Bund, Frithjoff Storkau, was also a member of the NSDAP and the JdO. He was sent to Westphalia at the beginning of March 1923 to make contact with Wilhelm Niggelmann, the Landesleiter of the Bund in Southern Westphalia. Storkau's tasks were defined as, firstly, to find out which persons were spies (for the French, one presumes); secondly, to find out who was collaborating with the French; and thirdly, to organise acts of sabotage against the occupation troops. 138) Niggelmann, as well as having an interest in furthering the Bund Oberland in the province, was a member of the NSDAP and was active in Hagen and Altena on behalf of that party. 139) Following the November Putsch, Niggelmann was to be an important figure in the regional NSDAP.

In line with developments in Munich in the first half of 1923, that is to say the increasing spirit of co-operation between the NSDAP and several para-military associations, a new "united front" emerged in Westphalia. This brought together the activist elements of the Nazi movement with a number of para-military and right-wing organisations. 140) In Hagen their fusion

136) For example, the "Schlagetergedächtnisbund" of Hamm, which joined the NSDAP en bloc in 1925; Police report, Hamm, 16 February 1925: SAM I PA/398.

137) Police report, Hagen, 29 July 1923: SAM I PA/273.

138) Police statement summarising interrogation of Storkau, no date: SAM I PA/370.

139) Report on Niggelmann's activities by the Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, Berlin, 17 March 1923: SAM I PA/370.

140) For the situation in Munich in the spring and summer of 1923 see Horn, op. cit., pp.108 ff.; Fenske, op. cit., pp.188 ff.. Cf. Schön, op. cit., pp.38 ff..

produced the Verband der nationalen Kampforganisationen, the nucleus of which was formed by members of the banned Stahlhelm and Wachenfeld's "Anti-Semitic League". 141) This local organisation gave rise to a regional one in which a variety of associations were represented, the VNKV, which in August 1923 subordinated itself to the SA Oberkommando in Munich. The military leader of the VNKV Gau Hagen, which covered the south-eastern section of Westphalia, was a retired Lieutenant called Gelberg, who was given full control of the regional movement by GÖring and Hoffmann. The joint political leadership of the organisation fell to Wachenfeld and a retired army Captain, von Saal. The VNKV was strongly Nazi orientated; Gelberg was prepared 'without further ado, to exclude all those who do not subordinate themselves to the NSDAP without reserve'. 142)

The evidence available suggests that the VNKV, though active in the sabotage movement in the occupied zone, was primarily organised to prepare a Putsch against the national government. This idea was current in Munich in the summer months. Gelberg headed only one of three zonal units of the VNKV created in Westphalia, the other two areas falling under the control of two retired lieutenants, Grünscheidt, and Koch respectively. These men were given 'full authority' by the Chief of Staff of the SA 'until at least the ninth day of mobilisation'. 143) The creation of the VNKV represented formidable progress on the part of the National Socialists. It brought together many people who had previously jealously guarded their independence and authority within the framework of separate associations. The Munich organisers were well aware of the ease with which the VNKV could fly apart if the situation in Westphalia was not handled carefully. One can see this in the letters sent to individuals who made contact with the Munich SA asking how best they could support

141) Report by the Hauptmeldestelle, Hagen, 12 July 1923: SAM I PA/370.

142) "Notizen aus Ausführungen des Herrn Gelberg bei einer inoffiziellen Besprechung der Vaterländischen Verbände", Hagen, 27 August 1923: HA 17/297.

143) Ibid..

the "national cause". Such independent enquiries were answered with the instruction that they should get in touch with local leaders such as Gelberg, Grünscheidt or Koch before they started the recruitment of their own SA formations. The Munich authorities urged them to do nothing before contact with the local leaders had been made, stated that recruitment among the organisations 'of these gentlemen' should be avoided at all costs, and said that new leaders 'should not create unrest in the region at any price'. ¹⁴⁴⁾ That there was sufficient rivalry among the various individuals in the province without new 'leaders' confusing the issue further, emerges from a letter of complaint sent to Munich by Grünscheidt. He 'desired written authorisation and confirmation of his full powers over the SA in his area' to counter the claims and assertions of a character called Heinz, who was spreading the rumour that he controlled 'the National Socialists in the Rhineland and Westphalia'. Grünscheidt also called for instructions for the district in the event of 'revolution' or 'alarm'. ¹⁴⁵⁾ It seems that by September the organisation in the Gau was complete, 'with the exception of the National Socialists in Elberfeld'. The only urgent requirement was for two machine guns. ¹⁴⁶⁾

The role played by the VNKV in the November Putsch is not clear. Whether it mobilised or was caught unprepared by the events remains a mystery because material covering this episode is lacking. ¹⁴⁷⁾ The official account of the history of the Westphalian NSDAP mentions only two local responses to the Munich Putsch, but neither involved more than a handful of people, and whether these had any connections with the VNKV is not mentioned. ¹⁴⁸⁾ Regardless of the reaction, the Munich affair was of great importance to the Nazi cause in Westphalia in one important aspect. It brought Hitler and his movement to the

¹⁴⁴⁾ Oberkommando SA, Munich, 13 September 1923, to Kanertz, Iserlohn: HA 17/297. SA Oberkommando, Munich, 14 July 1923, to Koenen, Lippstadt: HA 17/298. Cf. the situation in Hesse, see Schön, op. cit., pp. 40 ff..

¹⁴⁵⁾ Rudolf Grünscheidt to Munich, Velbert, 12 August 1923: HA 17/297.

¹⁴⁶⁾ Wissmann, VNKV Hagen, to Munich, 7 September 1923: HA 17/297.

¹⁴⁷⁾ Reaction in North Germany was very limited as far as evidence goes. For the situation in Lower Saxony, see Noakes, op. cit., p. 40; also Farquharson, op. cit., p. 114; cf. Schön, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁴⁸⁾ Beck, op. cit., p. 350 and p. 412.

attention of the nation as a whole; the event made front-page news in even the smaller provincial newspapers. 149) To the National Socialists, and to the völkisch circles as a whole, the putsch also gave the cause a martyr. In Westphalia the putsch, and its aftermath, the trials of Hitler and Ludendorff, were to give widespread coverage and much free propaganda to what had been a relatively obscure movement.

149) For example, Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 10 November 1923.

Chapter 5. CONFLICT AND CONFUSION: 1923-1925.

The Völkisch Maelstrom: November 1923 to December 1924.

The Reich ban imposed on the NSDAP following the putsch did not affect the position of the Westphalian Nazis, since the party was already illegal as a consequence of the Prussian ban of 1922. It would have been very difficult to weed out the Nazi element in the province, for the NSDAP had moved into the völkisch movement as a whole. Barring such exceptions as the Hagen group under Wachenfeld, it no longer retained a National Socialist identity. The ban by the Prussian authorities, and its enforcement, had been successful enough at least to prevent any open abuse of the law. The few illegally operating groups had little chance of furthering their cause openly. In this situation the Nazis could hardly compete in terms of attraction with other völkisch organisations. To add to the many difficulties facing the Nazi branches at the time of the Prussian ban, the Munich centre took a very negative attitude to the fortunes of the non-Bavarian branches.¹⁾

The arrest of Hitler and Ludendorff created considerable confusion within völkisch circles throughout Germany. The Munich affair above all gave great opportunities to the leadership of the DVFP to extend its influence. With its superior organisational structure, its freedom to operate, and a relatively healthy supply of funds, the DVFP was now in a most advantageous position to cash in on the disarray in the ranks of the right-wing extremists. The DVFP was not able, however, to make the most of the situation. In the eyes of the völkisch activist the party had certain defects which prevented the complete absorption of all völkisch support. Resented above all were the participation of the DVFP in elections and the "parliamentary horse-trading" associated with

1) Orlow states that "The pre-putsch NSDAP in northern Germany had been very much an organisational step-child. Since Hitler expected the events in Bavaria to propel him to national prominence, he was not seriously concerned with the party's organisational expansion outside of Bavaria"; Orlow, op. cit., p.40.

the movement. In Westphalia another handicap was the overall bourgeois image of the DVFP. These "blemishes" were to repulse considerable sections of the extreme right in the province. The development of the Völkisch Sozialer Block (V-S-B) in the spring of 1924 is indicative of this resentment.

The movement towards a broader völkisch alliance, as ultimately realised in the V-S-B, pre-dated the national ban of the NSDAP. The removal of Hitler as effective leader following the putsch opened new avenues for the DVFP's drive to achieve a united völkisch bloc. The first attempt to smooth over the friction existing between the DVFP and the NSDAP, and to define areas of activity on a geographical basis, occurred immediately before the putsch in an agreement reached in Munich on 24 October 1923 between von Graefe, for the DVFP, and Esser, representing the NSDAP. In the agreement it was stated that the DVFP was the only party in North Germany with which the National Socialists would co-operate as long as the ban was in operation. The relationship between the two parties was clarified in the following fashion: 'In those places in which the NSDAP has formed independent groups and associations, close co-operation will be advised. There will be no objections from the side of the NSDAP to the organisational inclusion of individuals and groups supporting National Socialism through the DVFP in those places in which an organisational inclusion in the NSDAP is impossible, with the proviso that the adherence of such groups and individuals to the NSDAP will not be affected'. 2) The agreement was overtaken by the putsch, which radically altered the respective position of the two parties. The position of the DVFP was enhanced further by Hitler's choice of Rosenberg as the new leader of the NSDAP, since he lacked the qualities necessary for the job, above all the necessary authority over, and influence on, the party. One immediate result was the tendency of every branch leader to see himself as the caretaker of Hitler's interests, an attitude

2) "Vertrag", signed by Esser and von Graefe, Munich, 24 October 1923:
HA 69/1508.

which made life very difficult for the Munich party centre.

The situation the Nazis found themselves in following the ban was infuriating from their point of view. For the putsch coincided with, and partly caused, a marked swing towards the völkisch circles. This was due in part to the great amount of free propaganda given to Hitler and his associates in the national and provincial press. 3) The drift towards right-wing radicalism was also in part the consequence of the impact of the inflation and the economic insecurity of large sections of the population. The collapse of the Mark left a deep imprint on the minds of those affected and fundamentally altered the political outlook of the masses. 4) One of the beneficiaries of the discontent was the radical Right. The increasing support which the völkisch-national elements were able to gather did not escape contemporary observers. Thus in a report by the Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung at the beginning of 1924 it was noted that 'the völkisch movement has seen a strong increase in the immediate past, not only from members of the middle class, but also from the working class'. 5)

The problem facing the Nazis was how, given the ban, they could benefit from this situation. In Westphalia, as elsewhere, the old habit of appearing in a new guise after successive bans was continued. Nazi activity concentrated in the first instance in the Rolandbund, supporters of which were active from November 1923. The organisation was new to the province, but had been observed elsewhere in Germany in 1922, at Magdeburg and Hamburg. In both cities the

- 3) Abel notes that "Throughout the period from 1920 to 1923 the German press had practically ignored the movement. After the Putsch, however, it was forced to give columns to the event, as well as to Hitler's speeches at the trial. Hitler became a national figure overnight"; in T. Abel, The Nazi Movement. Why Hitler came to Power, New York, 1965, p.69.
- 4) "We know that the inflation and the accompanying disorders turned important segments of the population against the Republic. ... It is clear that the collapse of the mark was a shattering emotional experience for many people. It provoked a mood of helplessness and despair. ... Many of the dispossessed gave way to all sorts of primitive hostilities. In the atmosphere of heightened political suggestibility, the agitation of the extreme right found their opportunities"; K. Ringer, The German Inflation of 1923, New York, 1969, p.165.
- 5) Report by the Reichskommissar, Berlin, 11 February 1924: copy in SAM I PA/344.

Rolandbund had had strong connections with the NSDAP. 6) The organiser of the Rolandbund in Westphalia was a Bavarian, Anton Geiger, who attempted to found Nazi branches in Hemer, Westig and Altena in November 1923, primarily by making contact with, and winning over, known right-wing agitators in the region. His activities came to light when one of his letters to Niggelmann (a leading figure in the Westphalian Bund Oberland) fell into the hands of the police. In this letter Niggelmann was asked to form a branch of the NSDAP under the cover name of "Rolandbund Altena", with the instruction that, if he was unable to comply with the request, he should give Geiger the name of a suitable and dependable person who would work for the Nazi cause in the area. 7) A subsequent search of Geiger's home provided evidence that he was involved with the NSDAP. Among the völkisch propaganda material found were several copies of Drexler's "Mein politisches Erwachen". 8) A branch of the Rolandbund was also formed in Soest by an active Nazi supporter, Franz Rolofs. 9) Rolofs had been engaged in the völkisch cause for some time, and had been deported from the Ruhr occupation zone by the French because of his activities. In a statement to the police Rolofs admitted his membership of the 'Hittler (sic) movement' and his continuous propaganda activity on behalf of the NSDAP in Düsseldorf, Elberfeld, and Soest. At the time of his arrest, Rolofs had just formed a "Rolandbund Soest" consisting of some thirty to forty Nazi sympathisers. At the first branch meeting there were readings from Hitler's speeches. The articles of association established the link with Munich, for according to the rules every member of the organisation was automatically also a member of the Munich branch of the NSDAP. Every member also had the duty to take a völkisch newspaper. Membership was open only to those of pure Aryan descent.

6) Report by the Reichskommissar, Berlin, 11 February 1924: copy in SAM I PA/344.

7) Police report, Altena, 6 November 1923: SAM I PA/344.

8) Report by the Landrat, Iserlohn, 27 November 1923: SAM I PA/344.

9) For the following see the police reports, Soest, 1 November and 1 December 1923: SAM I PA/344.

The Rolandbund made very little headway before it was banned as a continuation of the NSDAP, in February 1924. The Soest branch was by far the largest, followed by that of Hohenlimburg, which had around thirty members. ¹⁰⁾ There were also a number of smaller groups scattered around central Westphalia. The organisation remained very small but made its own contribution to the continuation and the spread of Nazism within the province.

Active also in this capacity, and closely connected with the activities of the Rolandbund, was the SVP. The closest links between the two movements were established in Hohenlimburg, where the two "directions" were led by the same person, and where they held joint meetings. ¹¹⁾ The organisational centre of the SVP was the stronghold of right-wing radicalism in the province, Hagen, where the first branch was formed in December 1923. ¹²⁾ This quickly established itself as the largest and most active völkisch organisation of the town. The SVP had good connections with para-military associations, being a member of the Kampfverband nordwestliche Gruppe, which looked towards and accepted 'the decisive influence of Hitler and Ludendorff'. In Hagen the SVP was joined by the Verband "Alte Kameraden" another member of the Kampfverband. The composition of the two Hagen groups represented in the Kampfverband was quite distinct. Within the SVP 'all classes and groups are represented', whereas the Verband "Alte Kameraden" was composed 'solely of former officers and leaders of other right-wing organisations'. The military leader of the Kampfverband was Gelberg, one of the chief organisers of the VNKV of the pre-putsch period, which had had close contacts with the SA Oberkommando of Munich.

In the spring of 1924 the SVP managed to establish branches in several other central Westphalian towns. Branches appeared in Vorhalle, Soest, Hohenlimburg, Altena and Menden. The chief organiser of the SVP was an

10) Police report, Hohenlimburg, 10 January 1924: SAM I PA/344.

11) Reports by the Landrat, Iserlohn, 29 January and 23 February 1924: SAM I PA/344.

12) For the following see the police report, Hagen, 15 February 1924: SAM I PA/344.

architect, Günther, who had been active in the Antisemitenbund of Hagen. Differences with its leader Wachenfeld resulted in a split of the association. This produced the nucleus of the members of the SVP branch in the town and led to a bitter feud with Wachenfeld which was to weaken the völkisch front in the months to come.¹³⁾ The new organisation had contact with both the NSDAP and the DVFP, and the influence of the latter predominated as the SVP developed. The two leaders of the DVFP, von Graefe and Wulle, spoke at meetings organised by the SVP. The von Graefe meeting, which coincided with the "Reichsgründungsfeier" of the Hagen branch in January 1924, attracted some 2,200 people, while Wulle drew 2,000 in mid-March.¹⁴⁾ Both these meetings were mammoth affairs by völkisch standards, quite exceptional in terms of the numbers participating. The many meetings of the various SVP branches at which Günther was inevitably the speaker, drew less support, with attendances above the hundred mark being exceptional.

The type of supporter attracted to the SVP is revealed by Günther's own analysis in a speech made in Soest in April 1924: 'Most of us have been reduced to poverty ... And what has happened to all those whom one can best describe as the sufferers, the dispossessed and the unemployed - victims of the developments of recent years? It is really touching to observe that it is especially these elements which comprise the bulk of our movement. They are the carriers of our great völkisch Freedom Movement. The distress which our war victims find themselves in is unbelievable. In Hagen we have our quota at every meeting; from week to week their number grows. In our movement one finds people with no income, people who struggle to secure their daily bread, people who are not in a position to finance our movement.'¹⁵⁾ Beyond the economically insecure, the SVP found strong support from youths and women, the latter often accounting for 25 per cent of the turn-out.¹⁶⁾

13) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Arnsberg, 9 February 1924: SAM I PA/344.

14) Police reports, Hagen, 15 February and 20 May 1924: SAM I PA/344.

15) Police report, Soest, 22 April 1924: SAM I PA/344.

16) Police report, Vorhalle, 23 February 1924; report by the Landrat, Iserlohn, 29 January 1924; police report, Hagen, 20 May 1924: SAM I PA/344.

The propaganda of the party was a mixture of völkisch and National Socialist ideas, and in their efforts to win support party speakers emphasized SVP links with both Hitler and Ludendorff. 17) Along with the usual anti-Semitic and nationalist slogans, the SVP made great efforts to attract working class support through the distribution of leaflets with a strong socialist emphasis:

Workers! Let's have a pogrom against supporters of the Swastika! Murder them, as happened to the hostages in Munich, for they fight the profiteer with all the means at their disposal.

Shoot them down in the street, as happened in Göppingen and Lünenstadt, for they are deadly enemies of international capitalism.

Throw them into the streets, as occurred in Central Germany, for they want to nationalise even the banks.

Prevent their meetings, otherwise they will free the worker from deceitful, incapable leaders.

Spread lies about them, so that the nation will not recognise them as their saviour.

Down with the supporters of the Swastika, for they are terrible "enemies" of the workers.

The thinking worker will attend völkisch meetings and form his own opinion.

SVP. 18)

The main party speaker Günther also emphasized the "socialist angle". He too 'supported Socialism', but not the 'perverted Jewish-marxist-international-socialism', though he did not elaborate what exactly his "socialism" consisted of. 19) More detailed and informative was an analysis of the SVP programme in a speech by Günther at Hagen, in which the objectives and philosophy of the movement were dealt with at length: 'We know that there are two pre-requisites for the cleansing and the national renewal of the German fatherland: one is the need to instil nationalist ideas in the broad working masses, and the other is the attitude of youth ... The roots of our decline and also of the lost war lie anchored in the pre-war period. When we ceased to be an agrarian state and became instead an industrialised community in which industrialisation embraced

17) Analysis of Günther's speeches in police report, Hagen, 22 April 1924: SAM I PA/344.

18) Copy of pamphlet in police report, Hohenlimburg, 18 March 1924: SAM I PA/344.

19) Report by the Landrat, Iserlohn, 29 January 1924: SAM I PA/344.

the broad masses, then fundamental differences appeared. Stoecker and Naumann tried to point out the dangers resulting from this development. The road towards greatness has to be based on social harmony, a fact first recognised by the völkisch-National Socialist circles, which see the necessity for a complete re-organisation of our financial and economic structure. Because of the awareness of working class interests shown by our movement, the völkisch movement has been attacked not only by left-wing, marxist circles, but also by the great-capitalist circles, which must be viewed as the exploiters of the German Volk. We are anti-capitalist, and especially hostile towards international capitalism. We hold that some capital is necessary and useful, of course. Capital which is harmful is that which increases through interest acquired in banks and stock-exchanges, capital which does not really work for itself, which can only be termed parasitic of productive work. That form of capital is of special concern to our völkisch-National Socialist movement.' Günther went on to state that the völkisch struggle against capitalist exploitation could only be achieved through the formation of a united völkisch front, in which there was no room for fellow travellers and which was not simply to consist of a herd of voters, but committed activists. 20)

The desired völkisch unity was woefully lacking in Westphalia and on the national level. Günther's SVP was only one section of a fragmented völkisch movement split into several groups, with rival leaders feuding amongst themselves on the regional and national levels. The complications produced by this state of affairs need some unravelling. One of the major factors contributing to the confusion lay in the history of the NSDAP following Hitler's arrest. It became clear to Rosenberg and all concerned that an illegal, improvised underground continuation of the NSDAP in Bavaria was impracticable. The acceptance of this fact led to the formation of a new Nazi movement in the guise of the GVG. 21) This organisation proved rather ineffective under Rosenberg's control.

20) Police report, Soest, 22 April 1924: SAM I PA/344.

21) Account of the formation in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.73-74; see also Horn, op. cit., p.177.

Its role was to be radically altered, and its effectiveness heightened, when Esser and Streicher took it over in July 1924. The GVG in turn was part of an electoral alliance, the V-S-B, the result of two meetings between representatives of the NSDAP and the DVFP. Rosenberg accepted the formation of this electoral alliance rather unwillingly. The appearance of the V-S-B owed much to the initiative of the Westphalian leaders of the DVFP and National Socialist groups, who revived the idea of a fusion. In January 1924 the first discussions took place between the two movements. Representatives of both parties active in the Elberfeld area came to Munich to discuss and determine the organisation of their respective branches in Rhineland-Westphalia. 22) This initiative probably influenced the decision of both sides to settle their differences at a meeting in Salzburg at the end of January. This gave rise to an agreement ratified in February in which co-operation was to be secured through a new association, the V-S-B, which was to supervise a combined effort of both parties in the forthcoming May Reichstag elections. The agreement divided Germany between the two parties on a proportional basis, with mixed provincial organisations in those areas in which neither party predominated. According to the provisions of the agreement, the electoral regions of Westphalia-North and -South were to be under the control of Munich. 23)

The translation of the national agreement into action on the regional level rapidly produced dissension and conflict in Westphalia. In the first instance the formation of the V-S-B in the province heightened the antagonism between Wachenfeld and Günther in southern Westphalia. These two influential figures not only quarrelled themselves, but dragged the GVG and DVFP leadership into their disputes, with serious consequences to the effectiveness of the V-S-B. One most damaging consequence was the undermining of the election campaign pursued by the V-S-B in the province, a fact lamented by Kaufmann in

22) Background described by Rosenberg at the Weimar meeting, in Jochmann, op. cit., pp.105-106.

23) Kube to the Vorsitzenden der Deutsch-Völkischen (NS) Wahlverbände, Berlin, 4 April 1924: BAK NS I/410.

a letter to the GVG Munich headquarters: 'We are working in the electoral district Coblenz-Trier. Also in the Ruhr region - news sounds favourable. Of all the election meetings ours are the best attended. In Westphalia-South the attitude of the electorate towards us has been fouled up by the unhappy confrontation between Günther and Wachenfeld, which is especially sad in view of the great number of large industrial towns in that area.' 24)

Wachenfeld's dispute with Günther and the GVG was more than just a clash of personalities. One cause was Wachenfeld's jealousy of the success of Günther's SVP, which eclipsed the Antisemitenbund controlled by the former. After the split within the "League", when a number of members joined the SVP, the Wachenfeld group numbered a mere fifty, compared to the SVP, which expanded rapidly to number 1,500 by March 1924. 25) The two men were also at loggerheads on ideological and tactical grounds. The SVP, which supported the V-S-B, and became its mainstay in southern Westphalia, pursued a policy designed primarily to attract the working class. The main slogan in the election months was 'Bread and Work for the Workers'. Simultaneously Günther attempted to cut the ties existing between his movement and the middle class and academic völkisch supporters, who had no place in his "socialist" movement. 26) This line was strongly opposed by Wachenfeld and his supporters, who refused to appeal purely to the working class. Wachenfeld believed in the concept of the "Volksgemeinschaft", and saw his movement as a rallying point for all völkisch thinking Germans, regardless of their social status. 27) To make matters worse, during the dispute Wachenfeld's control over the Antisemitenbund slipped from his hands. One of his close associates, Grotehusmann, formed a branch of the GVG in Hagen in March 1924, which meant in effect the disappearance of the Antisemitenbund. 28) From Wachenfeld's correspondence with the

24) Karl Kaufmann to GVG Munich headquarters, Elberfeld, 20 April 1924: BAK NS I/410.

25) Police report, Hagen, 11 March 1924: SAM I PA/387.

26) Lambers, op. cit., p.206; Beck, op. cit., p.308.

27) Bergisch-Märkische Zeitung, 29 April 1924.

28) Police report, Hagen, 28 March 1924: SAM I PA/344.

GVG party centre in Munich it emerges that he had nothing to do with this development, and that it was in fact carried out behind his back: 'The GVG branch in Hagen was founded at that time by representatives of the old völkisch elements without my participation. It was formed at a time when I was away on a business trip. I have nothing to do with the branch or its leadership, for the chairman is Grotehusmann. At the time it was founded I was designated as an "honorary member", but I have placed very little value on this title, for I am fundamentally opposed to all such honorary titles.' 29) Wachenfeld became increasingly disenchanted with this new development, and especially with the direction taken by the GVG under Rosenberg and his policy of co-operation with the DVFP in the shape of the V-S-B. He also objected to the type of personnel involved in the völkisch movement, both at regional and at national level. At the first public meeting of the GVG branch of Hagen, which Wachenfeld attended, he gave voice to his doubts about, and his dissatisfaction with, the general trend in the völkisch camp, noting 'the division and undermining attempts by völkisch figures, especially in Hagen and the surrounding area'. His major grievance related to the new leaders emerging in the area, who were pushing aside the traditional organisers of the völkisch cause: 'One must be careful about this', he observed, 'one should only acknowledge those leaders who have been active in the movement for at least two years.' Giving his version of the split within the Antisemitenbund he pointed to the 'insertion of a wedge supporting the Berlin direction by the Elberfeld leaders of the DVFP, people who were very agile verbally, but who supported rather shadowy leaders', a reference to Günther no doubt. Wachenfeld also attacked the nature of the propaganda of the SVP, whose 'programme was stolen from the programmes of several parties, ranging from the DNVP to the KPD', and he emphasized 'that

29) Wachenfeld to GVG Munich, Hagen, 2 June 1924; copies of the letter to Hitler, Anton Drechsler (sic), H. Esser, Josef Stolzing, NSFP Berlin, and Feder, Mdr Berlin: BAK NS I/411.

the Berlin direction (of the DVFF, one presumes) has already placed its hopes on this concoction'. 30)

Wachenfeld was also at odds with Rosenberg, who came in for heavy criticism in the spring of 1924. The main reason for his hostility was the alleged support which Rosenberg was giving to Günther and the regional V-S-B. Wachenfeld was also disgusted with Rosenberg for allowing the NSDAP to participate in the parliamentary system. The conflict came to a head in the course of the May election campaign, in which, according to Wachenfeld, Rosenberg had given Günther 'a written authorisation' of full power in the region. This upset Wachenfeld on several counts, not least because he considered that his services to the movement over the years entitled him to be automatically recognised as the leading figure of the völkisch movement in southern Westphalia. When Rosenberg denied that he had ever agreed to Günther's request, implying that Wachenfeld was a liar, there was a sharp protest from the latter. Writing to the GVG, Wachenfeld asserted that his version was accurate, and that his facts 'reflect the truth'. He went on to accuse Rosenberg of having broken his word, which he presumed was due to an oversight on Rosenberg's side, rather than to malice. Wachenfeld continued, 'Rosenberg may well be academically sound, but his way of conducting business is proof that he is incapable of dealing with the practical aspects of a movement as significant as the one under his leadership ... Has Mr Rosenberg such a short memory that he cannot remember having delegated power to elements as low as Günther? Can he not remember his rejection of the so-called "völkisch structure" which I have founded? Instead of withdrawing his scandalous authorisation in order to strengthen the position of the old National Socialists of Westphalia-South, he fiddle-faddled with the Günther clique right to the end of the election campaign.' 31)

As a result of the division of opinion within the völkisch camp in southern

30) Police report, Hagen, 25 March 1924: SAM I PA/344.

31) Wachenfeld to GVG Munich, Hagen, 2 June 1924: BAK NS I/411.

Westphalia, two separate groups contested the May elections of 1924, the official V-S-B led by Günther, and Wachenfeld's "Völkischer Block Liste Wachenfeld" and this despite the fact that Wachenfeld retained the second place on the list of candidates of the V-S-B in Westphalia-South. ³²⁾ Wachenfeld's independent effort was disowned by the GVG leadership which expelled him from the movement before the poll took place. This decision was taken to combat 'the proven lies and machinations' of Wachenfeld and his allies in the "Westfälischer Vorwärts". ³³⁾ Wachenfeld, because of his rejection of the 'parliamentary game', conducted a campaign of what might be described as 'non-involvement'. His self-justificatory views were made clear in a lengthy review of the May election: 'As is well known to all völkisch elements in Westphalia-South ... efforts by the DVFP member Wiegershaus of Elberfeld in the second half of last year led to a division in the ranks of the völkisch movement of Westphalia. These efforts were designed to pervert our idealistic völkisch cause, represented until then by the old Westphalian leaders of the movement, into a party affair of the old style. The Westphalian leaders had ... made it clear from the start to the representatives of the party cliques sailing under the völkisch banner, namely Wiegerhaus (Elberfeld) and Günther (Hagen), as well as to the influential circles in Munich and Berlin, that they would rather destroy the völkisch cause in Westphalia than consent to a devaluation of the völkisch movement to the level of a party affair. ... But since those warned believed that they could ignore the warning, we old völkisch members have been forced to make our threat a reality. We were aware, of course, of the fact that in view of the unbelievable intrigues we ourselves had little to expect from the election result, and that large numbers would turn to the German Nationalists. This was inevitable considering

32) The list is reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.546-547. The first candidate was a miner, Heinrich Dolle from Kleinberg, County Büren. Dolle was an active speaker on behalf of the NSDAP not only in Westphalia, but as far afield as Bavaria: see the report on Dolle by the Landrat, Büren, 14 March 1924: SAD MI IP/570.

33) Lambers, op. cit., pp.206-207; Beck, op. cit., p.547. The "Westfälischer Vorwärts" was founded in 1920; a weekly, it was printed in Hagen and supported the völkisch movement: see reports by the police, Hagen, 15 and 16 February 1924: SAM I PA/344.

the present circumstances. For we represent the view that the völkisch cause is still guarded better under the German Nationalist flag than under the flag of those committed to boss rule, as represented by the V-S-B in Westphalia-South. We of the völkischer Block, with our anti-parliamentarian attitudes, have not attempted in any way, through meetings or any other exertions, to secure a mandate, for on our side virtually no electioneering was undertaken. ... It was our goal to checkmate the above mentioned political carpetbaggers and that has been achieved without meetings and speeches. We secured, despite our inactivity, 9,547 votes for our list in Westphalia-South. The V-S-B (Günther) received 19,097 votes, which must be seen as a small reward given the large number of meetings, consecrations of flags and other political theatricals launched in the course of the election period.' 34)

Wachenfeld's actions were determined to a large degree by his belief in the old, traditional völkisch ideas as he saw them. The concept of turning the movement into a parliamentary one was heretical in his eyes. The GVG leadership could do little to bring him into line. Rosenberg's control in Westphalia was of no consequence as far as Wachenfeld was concerned. Indeed, attempts to persuade Wachenfeld to drop his separate "electoral" effort were seen by him as affronts. He considered himself to be his own master and made this very clear in a broadside directed against Rosenberg and the GVG: 'And then there is the accusation that I did not withdraw my own election organisation despite repeated requests to do so, and in your letter of the 19th of this month you observe that I did not comply with the instructions. Well, what on earth are you thinking of? Are you by chance my superior Mr Rosenberg?' Wachenfeld had precise ideas about his position. 'I have', he wrote, 'always made it clear to the party leadership, and Mr Esser will remember this, that I would accept the responsibility of leading the local organisation on the

34) Wachenfeld's account reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.552-553.

understanding that I would have timely and adequate knowledge of the developments inaugurated by you. ... We can only work together if you consider me and my friends not as subordinates, but as partners in the common cause' 35)

Wachenfeld's opposition to Rosenberg's tactics and leadership, and the questioning of the wisdom of the V-S-B concept and the alliance between the GVG and the DVFP, were echoed in a reply to his June letter by one of the correspondents, Esser. The latter, embroiled in a personal vendetta with a number of völkisch figures in Bavaria, not only sympathised with Wachenfeld's views and attitudes, but added his own sharp criticisms of the personalities involved in the National Socialist and völkisch movement, ranting against the 'Junkers, stupid academics, thick-headed lawyers and brutal impostors' who had appeared in the party and were out to 'destroy the belief in Hitler's work'. 36)

Esser's letter to Wachenfeld is a good example of the type of polemic Esser was to use against his opponents in the conflict which broke out in the GVG in the summer of 1924. The vicious personal attacks were to create deep splits within the National Socialist movement, and by the end of the year the attacks produced widespread hostility to Esser and his group. Tension was felt within the GVG as soon as Esser returned from exile and assumed a leading position within the organisation. His claim to be Hitler's only true disciple and loyal follower was supported by Streicher. Rosenberg was unable to cope with such an alliance, and the two men soon pushed him into the sidelines. In practice Esser and Streicher took over the leadership of the GVG, a position they used to resist attempts to unite all völkisch organisations. Such united organisations were the Völkisch-Block movement in Bavaria, and the V-S-B's successor, the NSFB at national level. 37) Esser and Streicher were able to strengthen their position within the National Socialist movement as a consequence of Hitler's attitude of non-involvement and non-commitment, an attitude

35) Wachenfeld to GVGev Munich, Hagen, 2 June 1924: BAK NS I/411.

36) Esser to Wachenfeld, (z.Z.) Berlin, 20 June 1924: BAK NS I/411.

37) A sound analysis of the conflicting groups is given by Horn, op. cit., pp.172 ff..

forced on him by his situation. 38) Hitler's decision to withdraw from politics in the summer of 1924 and to let things run their course until his release permitted increased independence not only to the Esser-Streicher circle within the GVG, but also to other National Socialist groups. This meant that sizeable National Socialist sections remained aloof from the NSFB. One such group was organised by Esser and Streicher in the form of a 'new' GVG, which emerged from an extraordinary meeting held on 9 July 1924. 39) The movement developed by the two faced great problems and had only a limited importance on the national level. Both the organisation and the finances of the GVG at the time of the 'take-over' left much to be desired. Of the fifty party branches only five had met their responsibilities vis-à-vis Munich, and the party leadership was saddled with a debt of 55,000 Marks, the bulk of which had been accumulated in the election campaign of May. 40)

Esser and Streicher adopted a very independent line following their successful acquisition of power within the GVG, and refused to have anything to do with other völkisch constellations. The change of course by the new GVG leadership inevitably had its repercussions at regional and local levels. Within Westphalia it led to further re-alignments and re-adjustments and yet more quarrelling within the völkisch ranks. To understand this one has to look at the developments which took place in the first half of 1924. This period gave a general boost to the fortunes of right-wing radicalism owing to the poor economic situation and the publicity given to the Right by the Hitler and Ludendorff trials; these favourable circumstances led to the appearance of an extensive network of GVG branches within the province. The bulk of these had united with the DVFP branches to form the V-S-B 'electoral association' which was active in the May Reichstag election. 41) After the elections the

38) Hitler explained the reasons for his withdrawal in the Völkischer Beobachter, 26 February 1925; see also Jochmann, op. cit., pp.78 and 123.

39) "Rundschreiben", 7 August 1924: HA 42/857; reprinted in part in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.81-83.

40) "Rundschreiben", 7 August 1924: HA 42/857.

41) The establishment of GVG branches documented in SAM I PA/398 and SAD VII - 64 Band I.

leadership of the V-S-B in Westphalia attempted to transform this loose-knit alliance into a permanent "party" structure. At a meeting of the V-S-B leaders in Elberfeld on 25 May 1924 plans were forged to strengthen the co-operation between the GVG and the DVFP. Rhineland-Westphalia was divided into two regions for organisational purposes, that is into the occupied and unoccupied zones, the latter area, known as the Landesverband Westfalen of the V-S-B, falling to von Pfeffer, who set about organising the movement from the party centre established at Münster. These developments, inaugurated by local initiative, received the explicit approval of Rosenberg and the GVG headquarters in Munich. ⁴²⁾ It is most likely that these changes would have been pushed through in the province even without Rosenberg's forced consent. As it happened, the agreement of the GVG Munich centre made very little difference to subsequent events, since the local GVG branch leaders reacted independently to the new developments. Those who agreed with the changes gave a reserved acknowledgement to their new supremo von Pfeffer. Some elements resisted amalgamation vociferously. The major opposition came from Günther, who rejected von Pfeffer's leadership of the völkisch movement in the province and refused to have any dealings with him. ⁴³⁾ Rosenberg's intervention proved futile. Instead of following Munich's instructions to subordinate the Hagen branch of the V-S-B to the new regional centre, Günther attempted to form his own movement, which was not recognised by the Munich party centre. ⁴⁴⁾ Günther's efforts to go it alone came to little, and Rosenberg was cited as the chief cause of his organisation's collapse. ⁴⁵⁾ The isolated position Günther found himself in in the summer of 1924, with Esser backing his old rival Wachenfeld, and Grotehusmann rallying some GVG elements behind von Pfeffer's movement, led

42) Von Pfeffer to Elberfeld Zentrale, Münster, 28 May 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.539-540.

43) Günther to GVG Munich, Hagen, 6 October 1924: BAK NS I/411, GVG Munich to von Pfeffer, Munich, 27 June 1924: BAK NS I/410.

44) GVG to Günther, Munich, 27 June 1924: BAK NS I/410.

45) Günther to GVG, Hagen, 6 October 1924: "Auf Betreiben Rosenbergs ist mir durch die verschiedenen Manipulationen zweifelhaftester Art die Organisation zerschlagen worden"; BAK NS I/410.

to Günther's withdrawal from active participation in the völkisch movement. Like so many individuals and groups throughout Germany he decided to wait until Hitler's release and the time of a final clarification. ⁴⁶⁾

Von Pfeffer proved an efficient organiser of the V-S-B (later NSFB). He managed to persuade most GVG groups to join his organisation. Thus by the time Esser and Streicher took over the direction of the GVG in Munich there were few groups prepared to respond to the new direction introduced by the new leaders. There were few points of contact between such Westphalian groups and the GVG Munich party headquarters, which was not surprising in view of the weakness of the Esser supporters in the province. In Hagen Wachenfeld led a small group, but he did very little to promote the Esser cause. By the summer of 1924 he had grown tired of the conflicts, intrigues and squabbles which occurred so frequently in the völkisch camp. As early as March, moreover, he had made public his desire to give more attention to his business interests and involve himself less actively in politics. ⁴⁷⁾ Wachenfeld was less concerned with the formation of an efficient GVG branch than with the settling of his account with Günther. The conflict between the two became more acrimonious during the summer of 1924, and led finally to a court case, with Günther suing Wachenfeld for slander. In the dispute Esser was willing to give Wachenfeld considerable support, though Wachenfeld's desire to make use of Esser's letter of 20 June as evidence was turned down by its author, who feared that 'the letter would rapidly appear in all the newspapers in the whole of Germany and would cause in the final instance unending harm to the Great Movement and to Hitler'. ⁴⁸⁾ Wachenfeld continued to keep in touch with Munich for the rest of the year, retaining his characteristic style, that of one writing to an equal rather than that of a subordinate writing to

⁴⁶⁾ Günther to GVG, Hagen, 6 October 1924: BAK NS I/410.

⁴⁷⁾ Police report, Hagen, 25 March 1924: SAM I PA/344.

⁴⁸⁾ See the correspondence between Wachenfeld and Esser, 3 October and 6 October 1924 in BAK NS I/411.

his party leader. 49)

The most active supporter of Esser's GVG in Westphalia ultimately proved to be Wilhelm Orth, who joined Esser's movement after some initial hesitation. Orth's first contact with Esser in November 1924 seemed unpromising. The main interest of Orth's letter to Esser lies in its reflection of the uncertainty which reigned in the völkisch movement and the hope placed on Hitler to eventually solve all problems: 'My wish to participate actively in the furtherance of the ideas of our spiritual leader Adolf Hitler, as embodied in the GVG, has led me to work for the cause in Westphalia. This attitude has led me to face the fact that here in Westphalia there is an unshakable desire and complete agreement to remain true to the Reichsführerschaft of the NSFB, which is to be acknowledged until Adolf Hitler is free and has spoken. Should it be true that the Reichsvollzugsausschuss of the GVG is in the right, I nevertheless cannot participate in the destruction of the NSFB in Westphalia, since I could not square such an act with my conscience. The great sacrifices and efforts involved in the instillation of National Socialism can only be judged by those who have assisted this process. Since the idealism of Adolf Hitler touches my heart I am forced to refrain from furthering the propaganda of both sides and to remain a passive member of the GVG. The construction of a bridge between the two will surely be undertaken by Adolf Hitler. ... The situation in Westphalia is different from that of Bavaria. I am certain that von Pfeffer, as leader of the National Socialist movement of Westphalia, will only enforce the ideas of Adolf Hitler.' 50)

Within a fortnight of this letter Orth changed his mind and wrote to Munich offering his services. His reasons for doing so are not clear, though

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- 49) Wachenfeld felt free to 'advise' Esser; e.g. Wachenfeld to Esser, Hagen, 6 November 1924: "Aus der Zeitung erfuhr ich, dass Sie am letzten Sonntag bei der Vertretertagung in München sich mit Hr. Dinther (sic) zusammen getan haben. Aus diesem Anlass empfehle ich Ihnen grösste Vorsicht. Denn Dinther ist ein Schwarmgeist, der durch seinen zweiten Roman 'Die Sünde wider den Geist' sein redlich Teil dazu beigetragen hat, den völkischen Gedanken lächerlich zu machen"; BAK NS I/411.
- 50) W. Orth to GVG Munich, Münster, 8 November 1924: BAK NS I/411.

he may have become concerned about the direction the NSFB was taking. The fact that the NSFB had put forward an industrialist as chairman of the Prussian Landtag, with the comment 'that is the complete ruin of the Freedom Movement', may provide the explanation. 51) Orth founded a branch of the GVG in Selm, County Lüdinghausen, in November. The history of the branch, which is relatively well documented in the correspondence between Orth and the Munich party headquarters, throws much light on the difficulties faced by what became the most active GVG branch in the province. Orth listed the most obvious handicaps: the area in which he operated had a large mining community; there had never been a National Socialist movement in the locality; he was short of cash; he had no propaganda material at his disposal; finally, his movement had to face the competition of the NSFB, which was also attempting to establish a branch in the locality. 52) The Munich party centre, though somewhat surprised at Orth's change of mind, did much to support his early efforts by sending him propaganda material: newspapers, placards and a hundred Hitler postcards. Munich hoped that he 'would be active for the pure National Socialism as represented by the GVG', and enclosed a bill for the material sent to him, the cost of which could not be met by the party headquarters since 'we can only maintain our difficult position if for once the other groups fulfil at least partially their responsibilities'. 53) Financially the Selm-Beifang branch proved a liability to the GVG party centre. Orth's first request to Munich, following the enrolment of 'several members', had been that no demands should be made for the membership dues for at least two months. 54) Such requests were viewed unfavourably by Munich, which had severe financial problems of its own. In the reply to Orth, the Munich party headquarters stated that they had taken note of the 'difficult financial position in which your branch is placed at the moment. Nevertheless, we must ask you to pay to us urgently at least 20 per cent of the

51) Orth to GVG Munich, Selm-Beifang, 19 November 1924: BAK NS I/411.

52) Orth to GVG, Selm-Beifang, 19 and 25 November 1924: BAK NS I/411.

53) GVG to Orth, Munich, 27 November 1924: BAK NS I/411.

54) Orth to GVG, Selm-Beifang, 25 November 1924: BAK NS I/411.

membership dues, that is 10 Pf. per head. This is needed to help the party centre to survive financially in the present difficult circumstances'. 55)

Orth could do little to help Munich. In a long letter in mid-December he explained the financial plight facing his membership: 'Our newly founded branch has to struggle and fight for survival. Our members, mainly miners, have had, since their open acknowledgement that they are supporters of Hitler, to resist the most acute terror. Many are already in great need. I must ask you for rapid help for our deputy chairman, Weise, our most able agitator and a fearless fighter for the true spirit of Hitler. His poor wife has become melancholic because of the distress - no money, no food ... The poorest of our members sleep on the ground on straw. We need clothes - it is the duty of every National Socialist in the town to assist his fellow members immediately. If you cannot do anything personally, Mr Esser, please bring our plight to the attention of the movement through the National Sozialist. ... Can you find a post for Weise so that he can continue to work for the party? Anything will do as long as he can support his family.' 56)

Another GVG branch which was primarily working class in membership was that of Dortmund, founded towards the end of 1924 by Johann Esser. He too was a self-appointed "leader" of a group which was purely 'National Socialist (Hitler) in character, and nothing else' and looked towards the working class for support. Johann Esser's main concern was with the trade union question. Given his environment, he believed 'that through organised trade unions we would undoubtedly have at this time the best opportunity for the spread of National Socialist thought'. He was quite sure that their formation 'would ensure for us the greatest success'. 57)

Apart from the Hagen, Selm-Beifang and Dortmund branches of the GVG (Richtung Esser), there is little to suggest that the GVG made any significant

55) GVG to Orth, Munich, 6 December 1924: BAK NS I/411.

56) Orth to GVG, Selm-Beifang, 15 December 1924: BAK NS I/411.

57) J. Esser to the "Schriftleitung der Zeitung 'Völkischer Kurier' München", Dortmund, 9 October 1924: BAK NS I/410.

impact on Westphalia. The only other branch formed, apparently, was at Paderborn in January 1925. This too lacked adequate support and worked with very limited financial resources. The only thing Munich could offer to it was plenty of encouragement. 58)

The GVG under Esser and Streicher was too weak financially to assist the precarious branches established in a few towns in the province. The branches were permanently threatened by poor finances and the "hostility" of the environment in which they were operating. The lack of any regional organisation and the dependence on the Munich party centre for financial help proved limiting factors. Most important above all was the inability of the GVG to compete with other völkisch organisations. The most powerful attraction was exerted by the V-S-B, and its successor, the NSFB, which overshadowed not only the GVG, but all the other völkisch fragments active in Westphalia.

The V-S-B and the NSFB.

The V-S-B, predecessor of the NSFB, emerged in the early part of 1924. It drew together a variety of völkisch groups in what was initially an electoral alliance formed to contest the national and regional elections held in May 1924. Although the V-S-B and NSFB never included all the National Socialists and other völkisch elements active in Westphalia, the two organisations were by far the most efficiently organised and best supported of the diverse völkisch groups active in the region. 59) As the major rallying point of right-wing extremism these organisations played a crucial part in the development of National Socialism in the province. From their ranks were to emerge the leading figures of the re-organised NSDAP of 1925: the Gauleiter von Pfeffer, the district leaders and the bulk of the branch leaders.

The importance of the V-S-B in the history of right-wing radicalism in Westphalia lies in the organisational innovations it incorporated. Unlike

58) GVG to F. Hillebrand (Paderborn), Munich, 7 January 1925: BAK NS I/410.

59) On the formation of the V-S-B see this chapter pp.163 ff..

the regional Nazi movement, which failed to develop a regional structure and left individual branches to their own devices, the V-S-B developed a hierarchical structure with a regional organisation interposed between the local and national organisational units. This led to greater unity and strength in the long run and allowed regional leaders to establish greater authority over branch leaders through personal contact at Gau meetings and party rallies. In the creation of a vertical organisational structure with defined lines of authority the V-S-B anticipated in several ways the organisational structure of the post-1925 NSDAP. Another difference, again of importance in the long term development of the NSDAP, was that the V-S-B was organised to perform as a "party" from the very beginning, though, as is true also of the NSDAP in later years, the "parliamentary nature" was strongly denied in the party programme: 'The Freedom Movement is not a party; it has nothing to do with parliament or parliamentary spirit; on the contrary, it embraces all those who are sick and tired of party politics and parliamentarianism.' ⁶⁰⁾ This attitude was very much in line with National Socialist thinking in that the older Nazi leaders and members thought in terms of "movement" rather than "party". Wachenfeld's attitude was typical of some of the older Nazi members active in the Westphalian sphere. Unlike those who were to remain true National Socialists (by their definition) and were later to be organised in the GVG by Esser and Streicher, the supporters of the V-S-B were more flexible and realistic. However much elements within the V-S-B may have denounced the 'parliamentary farce', they nevertheless took the line of participation characteristic of the major coalition partner, the DVFP. The motive behind their attitude was made perfectly clear by the V-S-B's leadership: 'We do not want to ignore the many advantages available in these days to movements which have a strong bloc in parliament.' ⁶¹⁾ But the leadership did not see parliament as the

60) "Leitsätze", VSB Wahlkreis 17 Westfalen-Nord, 16 March 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.572-573.

61) Ibid., p.573.

'focal point' of the movement: 'The V-S-B does not represent the whole of the Freedom Movement: it is only its outlet, its exponent, its organ. We know very well that neither a decision nor the desired German freedom can ever be reached just through a parliamentary organisation and parliament. The Freedom Movement has as its focal point the Volk - in parliament sit only helpers and delegates. It is this difference of attitude which fundamentally differentiates us from all other real "parties", for they represent an end in themselves.' 62

The V-S-B had hardly been formed before its effectiveness was tested in the May elections of 1924. The Reichstag returns gave little encouragement to the movement. The best return came from Westphalia-North, where the V-S-B secured some 3.5 per cent of the vote; this was 50 per cent below the V-S-B's national average. 63) The return for Westphalia-South was abysmal, a mere 1.5 per cent. Of the 35 electoral districts only Koblenz-Trier (1.3 per cent) secured a worse result. In Westphalia-South the poor result was partly due to the existence of Wachenfeld's völkischer Block, which acted as a passive competitor. Its success reflected the large number of Nazis and völkisch supporters not prepared to enter the party game. Nevertheless, the results of the election elevated the V-S-B to the level of an important minority party. In Westphalia-North it polled only 0.1 per cent less than the DDP. Compared with the returns of the majority parties in both electoral areas in Westphalia, however, the V-S-B remained very much on the fringe of the political life of the province.

The low returns of the V-S-B were related in some degree to the unfavourable environment in which the party operated. In Westphalia the strength of

62) "Leitsätze", VSB Wahlkreis 17 Westfalen-Nord, 16 March 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.572-573.

63) Percentages from Milatz, op. cit., p.112. Two-thirds of the votes (20,100) came from the Regierungsbezirk of Minden, the rest from the predominantly Catholic Regierungsbezirk of Münster. In both districts the largest cities, Bielefeld and Münster respectively, provided 25 per cent of the vote; see H. Striefler, Deutsche Wahlen in Bildern und Zahlen, Düsseldorf, 1946, Appendix, Table 4.

the left-wing parties, the high returns of the Catholic Centre Party, and considerable support for various bourgeois parties accounted for the bulk of the votes. In some ways the results of the V-S-B were also due to poor organisation. The "party" was little more than a loose-knit association, an electoral alliance which could not automatically expect support from the diverse groups which it theoretically represented. There was no clarity as to who organised whom, and within the National Socialist and völkisch ranks, never mind with the voter at large, the term 'V-S-B' was often just a name.

The major effort to transform the V-S-B into a political movement of some significance came after the election. The leading spirit and chief organiser of the V-S-B was von Pfeffer, one of the many unable to settle down in the post-war period to civilian life and attracted to the activism and radicalism of the völkisch movement. ⁶⁴⁾ Von Pfeffer initially led the V-S-B organisation in Westphalia-North in the first months of its existence, and displayed in this capacity his organisational talent and attention to detail. His thoroughness and military style of leadership are evident in his first instructions to V-S-B branches under his control of May 1924, which left little to chance. Local leaders were informed about the availability of suitable völkisch reading material, about how to organise propaganda, canvassing, discussion, public meetings and so on, everything being described in the greatest detail. ⁶⁵⁾

At a meeting of völkisch leaders of Rhineland-Westphalia held in Elberfeld on 25 May 1924, von Pfeffer assumed control over the whole V-S-B organised in the unoccupied zone of Westphalia, the occupied districts falling to the control of the Elberfeld centre. ⁶⁶⁾ The new "Landesverband Westfalen" of the V-S-B which emerged from the meeting did not secure prior agreement from Munich for the organisational changes initiated on the regional level because

64) On von Pfeffer see chapter 4, p.137; further Krebs, op. cit., pp.218-220.

65) "VSB Westphalia-North to all Branches", Münster, 10 May 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.577-580.

66) For this and the following see VSB (von Pfeffer) to Elberfeld, Münster, 28 May 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.539-540.

von Pfeffer did not think that this was necessary. This independence created problems as soon as he tried to rally diverse völkisch groups behind the new Landesverband. The major problem was one of authority. Von Pfeffer had no "authorisation" to support his new position except that derived from those participating in the Elberfeld meeting. Events proved that he could not arbitrarily enforce his will on a movement one of the main features of which was the independent attitude of its various local and district leaders. Thus the leading figures of the V-S-B of southern Westphalia ignored the decisions arrived at in Elberfeld and organised their own Landesverband based on the boundaries of the Regierungsbezirk of Arnsberg. The leaders of this organisation were in a relatively strong position in that their authority was derived from the membership of the area. Party members had democratically elected not only the local branch leaders, but also, through elected delegates, the district and regional leaders and their respective committees. ⁶⁷⁾ Still, they were not averse to combining with von Pfeffer's organisation, though only after consultations, and not on the basis of decisions reached at Elberfeld in which they had not been involved. Of fundamental importance in keeping the two groups apart was also the fact that von Pfeffer based his leadership of the völkisch movement in Westphalia on the authority of Ludendorff, while the southern group looked to Hitler and were prepared to await Hitler's release before 'clarifying' the position. ⁶⁸⁾ It was the unlikelihood of such an early release which seems to have persuaded the leaders of the V-S-B of southern Westphalia to accept Ludendorff's candidate, von Pfeffer, as the authorised head of a united V-S-B for the whole of the province, for by the end of June 1924 agreement was reached between the two blocs. ⁶⁹⁾ Ludendorff's support

67) "Organisations Plan VSB Westfalen-Süd", no date (probably June 1924), reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.543-545.

68) M. Pferdekämpfer to Ludendorff, no date (beginning of June 1924?), in Beck, op. cit., pp.540-541.

69) Ludendorff to M. Pferdekämpfer, Munich, 10 June 1924; and VSB Landesverband Westfalen to M. Pferdekämpfer, Münster, 27 June 1924; both letters reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.541-542.

was sufficient to win over the bulk of the National Socialist and völkisch elements to von Pfeffer's organisation, while a series of meetings between von Pfeffer and völkisch leaders smoothed over former difficulties. 70)

The effort to unify the various right-wing extremists of Westphalia occurred at a time of renewed crisis within the völkisch circles on the national level, a crisis which inevitably had local repercussions. The occasion of the crisis was Hitler's decision in June 1924 to withdraw from politics for the duration of his imprisonment, and his determination to leave the movement to itself and start from scratch on his release. 71) Hitler's resignation, and his declaration that 'from now on no one has the right to act in my name, to refer to me or to give declarations in my name', confused the problem as to who wielded authority in the völkisch movement. 72) This new development made it much more difficult for those forces working towards a unified movement, as is witnessed by the situation in Westphalia, where 'all want a united movement but no one allows anyone else to bring it about'. 73) Hitler's decision increased the tendency of local and regional leaders to organise their own empires and resist amalgamation. In the long run Hitler's decision strengthened his position in that he became the focus of hope for the future, his supreme authority in the last resort being acknowledged by the various factions which crystallised in the latter half of 1924.

Hitler's decision was greeted most enthusiastically by the DVFP's leadership, which saw a chance opening up for a fusion of all völkisch elements within one national organisation. Since the autumn of 1923, and especially in the first two months of 1924, von Graefe and Wulle had been working to

70) Wilhelm Pferdekämpfer to von Pfeffer, Münster, 12 July 1924; in Beck, op. cit., pp.542-543. Wilhelm Pferdekämpfer had been "Schriftführer des Ausschusses der völkischen Verbände" in Westphalia-South, active on behalf of the V-S-B in the May Reichstag election of 1924.

71) A. Hitler to L. Haase, Landsberg, 16 June 1924; in Jochmann, op. cit., pp.77-78. Also H. Fobke to L. Haase, Landsberg, 23 June 1924; *ibid.*, p.91.

72) Hitler to L. Haase, Landsberg, 16 June 1924; in Jochmann, op. cit., p.78. On the consequences of Hitler's "resignation" see Horn, op. cit., pp.165 ff..

extend their influence; Hitler's decision increased their effort and seemed to promise greater reward. The difficulty of realising their aspirations to lead a united movement soon became evident. The Weimar meeting of 20 July 1924, designed to bring about unity, emphasized once again the conflicts to which the national völkisch movement was subject. Some 80 National Socialists took part in the meeting, and their response to the DVFP overtures reflected division rather than a general desire for unity. 74) The Nazi delegates could not agree on the question of closer co-operation with the DVFP, nor was there agreement about their relationship with the Reichsführerschaft (von Graefe, Ludendorff, and Strasser, the latter appointed by Ludendorff as Hitler's representative) which had emerged in the spring of 1924. Another thorny problem, on which diverse opinions were voiced, was the attitude towards participation in elections, which had been anathema to the old National Socialists of the pre-putsch days and which continued to be seen by some elements as leading to a 'dissolution' of the true National Socialist spirit. Conflicts among the National Socialist representatives about these issues split the NSDAP into various factions and led to a situation in which the Nazis agreed to disagree rather than to unite en bloc with the DVFP. It was this disunity and the antagonism it produced which prompted Sunkel, one of the participants, to conclude that the Weimar meeting could best be equated with the 'inner and outer dissolution of the old NSDAP'.

At the Weimar meeting the representatives of the Westphalian NSDAP placed themselves 'unconditionally behind the Reichsleitung'. 75) To interpret this decision as implying that a united front existed in the province among the Nazi groups is misleading. The representatives of von Pfeffer's V-S-B Landesleitung

74) For the following see the account by R. Sunkel: "Nationalsozialistische Vertretertagung in Weimar 20 Juli 1924": HA 44/893; another account of the meeting is that by A. Volck: "Vertraulicher Bericht über die nationalsozialistische Vertretertagung in Weimar am 20 Juli 1924", in Jochmann, op. cit., pp.98-102.

75) R. Sunkel: "NS Vertretertagung in Weimar 20 Juli 1924": HA 44/893.

Westphalia agreed to the fusion with the DVFP and the acceptance of the leadership of the Reichsführerschaft. But von Pfeffer was the first to admit that his organisation did not represent all Nazi opinion in the province, and it was only his part of the National Socialist-völkisch wing which participated in a second Weimar meeting held in August, at which the details of the fusion with the DVFP were worked out. 76)

Several sections remained aloof from the unity movement, though not for the same reasons. One important group in the Bielefeld area had never been integrated with the Westphalian sector, and had taken their lead from the North German National Socialists. The Bielefeld Nazis formed an integral part of the "Directorate" established by the North German Nazis in June 1924, and they ultimately became part of the National Socialist Arbeitsgemeinschaft formed in September 1924. 77) The "Directorate" and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft were very independent in their attitudes. The "Directorate" rejected the leadership of the Reichsführerschaft and the Munich GVG party centre, dis-trusted the DVFP, and looked solely towards Hitler as their leader. The head of the "Directorate", Volck, regarded himself merely as "Platzhalter" for Hitler until such time as he would be free actively to take over the Nazi movement once more.

Then there were those supporting the GVG under Esser and Streicher, opposed to the idea of a fusion with the DVFP. The GVG branches were relatively small and of no great significance, but they represented another National Socialist strain active in the province. 78) Finally, there were the supporters, centred on Hagen, of Günther's independent movement, who looked to Hitler and remained aloof from the other völkisch groups.

None of these groups had as many members as the V-S-B - renamed the NSFB after the second Weimar meeting. Much of the importance these organisations

76) VSB "Rundschreiben Nr. 12", Münster, 26 August 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., p.582.

77) For the following see Noakes, op. cit., pp.44 ff..

78) On the GVG in Westphalia see this chapter, pp.162 ff..

acquired was due to the vigour and assertive drive of von Pfeffer, who, whatever his limitations, did not lack energy and initiative. Following the Weimar meeting of July, he used his position as Landesleiter of the V-S-B to organise its successor before any new name had been determined for it. Without waiting to see what the local reaction to the dispute at the Weimar meeting would be, he set about rallying the völkisch groups. He simply glossed over the tactical and ideological points at issue, and gave a rather one-sided interpretation and superficial version of the July deliberations: 'In the völkisch movement agreement has been reached between Berlin and Munich. The Reichsführerschaft Ludendorff, Strasser and von Graefe has decided to organise a new movement.' 79)

The V-S-B branches were informed of the new name of the organisation, the "NSFB Greater Germany", towards the end of August in an invitation to völkisch leaders to attend a Gau meeting which was to complete the structure of the new party in the province and to be held on 14 September in Münster. It was emphasized in the invitation that all the requirements of the völkisch elements of Westphalia had been met at the second Weimar meeting on 16 August, at which the amalgamation of the DVFP and the NSDAP in Prussia was carried through, and that, indeed, the Westphalian representatives had had a great influence on the proceedings. 'The only point', it was stated, 'on which our wishes were not followed was in the creation of the Preussenleitung', though 'the widening of the Preussenführung into a triumvirate was suggested by Westphalia'. The fact that the word "party" did not appear in the new name was especially emphasized, undoubtedly to appease those who resented anything which implied a connection with party politics and parliamentarianism. 80)

The delegate conference of 14 September 1924 was attended by both Ludendorff and Strasser, and it coincided with a patriotic rally which mobilised völkisch and right-wing organisations throughout Westphalia. Thus the JdO,

79) Part of a formal letter of invitation sent to the völkisch leaders in the Hagen area by the NSFB, 5 August 1924: SAM I PA/344.

80) "VSB Landesverband Westfalen", Rundschreiben Nr. 12, Münster, 26 August 1924; in Beck, op. cit., pp.581-582.

the Stahlhelm and the WTB participated in the event. ⁸¹⁾ For the new NSFB the presence of Ludendorff at the meeting, which determined the various appointments of district and branch leaders, was of great importance, and his name was invoked by the new leaders to assert their authority and legitimise their position. ⁸²⁾

The NSFB was a well organised party resting on the organisational structure bequeathed to it by the V-S-B. Making full use of its efficient organisation it carried out a propaganda drive designed to bring about the absorption of all rival völkisch groups, and to win over new support from the numerous right-wing associations active in the province, especially the WB, the WTB and the Stahlhelm. In areas where the conflicts with existing völkisch leaders could not be resolved by discussion and persuasion, such as the Hagen area, von Pfeffer authorised new leaders to work these on behalf of the NSFB. Apart from the Hagen and Bielefeld districts there is little evidence to suggest strong or permanent opposition to the movement. In Hagen von Pfeffer attempted to bring Günther and Wachenfeld into line. Günther rejected any contact with von Pfeffer and withdrew from active politics in the latter half of the year. ⁸³⁾ Wachenfeld continued to look to the GVG as the legitimate authority of the National Socialist-völkisch movement. The obstinacy of these two important figures and their attacks on von Pfeffer and the NSFB led to their exclusion from the völkisch movement and an invitation was sent to their followers to join the new party. ⁸⁴⁾ Overtures were also made by the NSFB to the patriotic associations. Von Pfeffer's attitude to them was made known in a lengthy memorandum distributed to the Gau functionaries. ⁸⁵⁾ He aimed at a subversion

81) Police report, Münster, 15 September 1924: SAM I PA/344.

82) For example, Grotehusmann, district leader of the Volme-Lenne area, emphasized the fact that Ludendorff and Strasser had agreed on his appointment, and invoked their names to rally support: Police report, Hagen, 18 September 1924: SAM I PA/344.

83) GVG to von Pfeffer, Munich, 27 June 1924; Günther to GVG, Hagen, 6 October 1924: BAK NS I/410.

84) Police report, Hagen, 18 September 1924: SAM I PA/344.

85) For the following see the "Rundschreiben Nr. 13, VSB Landesverband Westfalen", Münster, 26 September 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.586-587.

of the existing associations by NSFB elements rather than a frontal attack. The leaders of the associations were not to be maligned by NSFB propaganda except if they were systematically suppressing völkisch members (he singled out the influential Kreuter of the Westphalian Stahlhelm). The JdO, it was hoped, 'would develop in the National Socialist spirit'. Recruitment for the purely völkisch organisations, such as the SA, was not to be carried out in those organisations which were thought to be developing along völkisch lines. Von Pfeffer noted that already the bulk of the membership of the Bund Oberland in Westphalia was to be found in the SA. Those patriotic and military associations which were regional and which lacked contact with any specific national movement were singled out for attention - namely the WTB, the WB, and the "Baltikumer". District leaders were urged to make contact with these organisations and to call in the Gau leadership if their overtures looked as though they were to be rewarded.

Von Pfeffer's hopes of strengthening the NSFB through the inclusion of patriotic and para-military associations rested on the almost traditional friendship which existed between them and the National Socialist-völkisch movement. In Hagen the JdO, the Wehrwolf and the Deutscher Orden had been closely associated with the V-S-B, while the WTB had members active in the SA. 86) In Münster the Stahlhelm and WTB were also an integral part of the V-S-B, with Gärtner, the business manager of the V-S-B and the NSFB, doubling up in his capacity as Gauleiter of the Stadtgau Münster of the WTB. 87) These organisations represented a large reservoir of potential members for the NSFB. The JdO and Stahlhelm were strong throughout Westphalia in 1924, having a network of branches which penetrated to the smallest community. 88) The WTB and WB were smaller organisations, but nevertheless contained significant numbers.

86) Police report, Hagen, 31 July 1924: SAM I PA/344.

87) Münstersche Zeitung, 27 August 1924; see also the police report, Münster, 10 January 1925: SAM VII - 64 Band 2.

88) On the JdO see SAM I PA/344 and SAD MI IP/617; on the Stahlhelm especially SAM I PA/372.

The WTB, especially strong in the Regierungsbezirk of Münster, had over 1,000 members in its Münster branch alone. ⁸⁹⁾ Both organisations were radical. The pro-völkisch sentiments of the organisations can be gauged from a series of articles published by their leaders in the local and provincial press at the time of the Munich putsch glorifying Hitler and his associates.

The leadership of the Westphalian NSFB pursued a constant "Sammelpolitik" to increase the strength and influence of the movement: the overtures made to the para-military and patriotic associations and to the forces of the "national right" were a constant feature of NSFB activity. ⁹⁰⁾ In the short term this policy did indeed draw elements from these quarters into the movement, but in the development of the NSFB this type of expansion had a dubious value in the long run as it undermined its unity and cohesion. Fusion tended to rob the NSFB of its own identity. In Hagen it resulted in the submersion of the NSFB into the "Notgemeinschaft Schwarz-Weiss-Rot", in which virtually all the right-wing extremist associations of the town and county were represented. Though the membership of this "Emergency Association" was an impressive 1,200, the NSFB lost itself in a welter of names: the WTB, Bismarckbund, Turn- und Fechtbund, Wikingbund, JdO, Stahlhelm, Wehrwolf, WB, and 'diverse' SA made up the association alongside the NSFB. ⁹¹⁾ Such conglomerations were prone to disputes and disintegration, and subject to the whims of the leaders of the separate organisations comprising the whole. This limited the tactical freedom of the NSFB, for in the formulation of policies the reaction of the various movements associated with it had to be taken into account.

The strength of the NSFB lay in the organisational framework developed under von Pfeffer. The organisation was based on a triple vertical division:

89) For the following see the police report, Münster, 4 June 1924: SAM I PA/370.

90) NSFB Gau Westfalen to Stahlhelm (Münster branch), Münster, 1 September 1924; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.584-586. Also police reports for November 1924, Hagen: SAM I PA/398.

91) Police report, Hagen, 15 December 1924: SAM I PA/398.

the Gau, district and branch levels. 92) To control and direct the party a Gau party headquarters was established at Münster. From it von Pfeffer built up his influence and authority over the district and branch leaders. Von Pfeffer also acted on behalf of the Westphalian NSFB at the national level. The party was a much more closely-knit unit than previous völkisch organisations. Gau meetings were organised to bring together those responsible for organisation and propaganda so that they could exchange ideas and discuss mutual problems. To ensure some financial support membership dues were controlled by the Gau party office. These were fixed at 1 RM per month for each member, a sum which was split up between the branch (which retained 40 Pf.), the district (20 Pf.) and the Gau (40 Pf.). A monthly report covering such details as membership strength and party activity had to be completed by every district leader. The Gauleiter von Pfeffer did much to instil purpose into the party, and the increasing confidence of the leadership in January 1925 can be measured by the plans for a weekly party newspaper, the "Völkische Westfale", and the idea of forming a National Socialist trade union in order to win over a larger number of working class supporters. 93) The standing of the NSFB was also enhanced through the contacts provided by the patriotic associations "allied" to the party. Through them, for example, the NSFB was able to make contact with the Army Command of Münster, a valuable relationship which furthered the reputation of the NSFB in certain circles of the population. 94) Von Pfeffer was also able to win financial backers, of vital importance for the NSFB, which lacked cash at all times. The cash contributions were especially important at election time. Before the Reichstag elections of December 1924 the party was able to secure some 16,000 Marks, with a promise of a further 14,000 Marks if the election results proved favourable. 95) The

92) On the details of the organisational structure of the Westphalian NSFB see "Rundschreiben Nr. 14, NSFB Gau Westfalen", 1 October 1924; full text in Beck, op. cit., pp.587-589.

93) Gauleitung der NSFB to Hitler, Münster, 31 January 1925; in Beck, op. cit., p.589.

94) Police reports, Hagen, 12 December 1924 and 21 January 1925: SAM I PA/398.

95) Von Pfeffer to Reichsparteileitung NSDAP, Münster, 22 August 1925: HA 4/86.

first payment was vital for the party. It allowed the NSFB to pay off its debts of 3,500 Marks and to finance the December election campaign. 96)

The election results of December were disappointing for the NSFB: 'bloody awful' (sau schlecht) to quote von Pfeffer. In Westphalia-South the drop in support was marginal in comparison with the May return, that is from 1.5 per cent to 1.1 per cent. 97) In Westphalia-North the movement lost over 60 per cent of its support, with a return of 1.3 per cent as against the 3.5 per cent secured in May. The Westphalian NSFB shared in the overall national decline in völkisch fortunes, but in relation to the catastrophic declines recorded elsewhere it did not fare too badly. 98) The lack of success can be put down to the fact that conditions for right-wing extremism were less favourable by the end of the year. The economic situation had stabilised and the prospects for the future were less grim. Also the NSFB had existed for too short a time to make a strong impression on the mind of the voter. The constant changes of name and the re-alignments which punctuated 1924 did little to enhance the chances of the movement. Added to this, the national and regional quarrels and divisions weighed heavily against the party. To illustrate the point one has only to look at the fortunes of the NSFB in Hagen, where the party could only poll one-third of the May return. Here the bitter quarrels among the local leaders had seriously weakened the völkisch movement. 99) Further, one has to note that not all the supporters of the DVFP had viewed the fusion with the National Socialists as desirable, while many National Socialists were disgusted with the increasing party nature of the NSFB, and refused to vote at all.

96) Report by the district leaders, NSDAP Gau Westphalia, Hamm, 13 September 1925: HA 4/86.

97) Election returns taken from Milatz, op. cit., p.112.

98) In Bavaria, scene of the greatest triumph of the völkisch movement in the spring elections of 1924, the vote fell from 16 per cent to little more than 5 per cent. See G. Pridham, Hitler's Rise to Power. The Nazi Movement in Bavaria 1923-1933, London, 1973, pp.29-30.

99) Police report, Hagen, 15 December 1924: SAM I PA/398. In Hagen the V-S-B (NSDAP) had polled 3.3 per cent (1,571 votes) in May 1924, a higher percentage return than the regional one. This despite competition from Wachenfeld's Völkischer Block: 1.3 per cent (616 votes), and the Nationale Freiheitspartei: 0.2 per cent (100 votes). In December the NSFB (NSDAP) secured only 1.5 per cent. Details from Lambers, op. cit., p.216 and p.226.

Conclusion.

On 12 December 1924 the ban on the NSDAP in Prussia was lifted, an indication of how little the authorities feared a Nazi revival. Nine days later Hitler was released from Landsberg. The question asked by the völkisch movement as it greeted its returning Messiah was, "What would Hitler do?" Technically there was no obstacle in Prussia to a reconstruction of the old NSDAP, which raised above all the question of whether the NSFB should continue. Hitler himself was in a strong position. The fragmentation of the völkisch movement, and the widespread hopes placed on him by all the various "directions", each of whom thought that he would declare for them, gave Hitler the power to determine events. His "above party" attitude, cultivated since his withdrawal from politics in June 1924, now brought him perhaps unexpected dividends. 100)

In the overall context of German politics, especially in the light of the poor December election results, the völkisch movement which greeted Hitler was of little importance and very much on the decline. This state of affairs also applied in Westphalia. But given the generally gloomy picture, it is nevertheless true that in Westphalia the possibility of forming a Nazi movement with organisational cohesion was much greater than it had been in the 1922 to 1923 period, provided that the NSFB could be won over and utilised as a rallying point for the other Nazi fragments. Small as the NSFB was, it had the necessary structure and personnel to provide a smoothly functioning apparatus. The early Nazi movement in the province always lacked cohesion, and failed to develop a Gau administration before it was banned in Prussia. The various successor organisations lacked continuity and hardly appeared in public before new bans were imposed by the authorities. The NSFB began to change this state of

100) A. Bullock puts forward the view in Hitler. A Study in Tyranny, London, 1962, pp.126 ff., that Hitler welcomed the schisms which had developed and is primarily to blame for the state of affairs which greeted him on his release. This view ignores the reality of the situation facing Hitler during his imprisonment. His initial attempts to direct the party had made clear to Hitler that it was impractical to continue exercising control, and realism, rather than Machiavellian scheming, had forced the decision on him.

affairs, but it too lacked sufficient influence and authority to unite all völkisch elements. With the name "Hitler" as a rallying cry, unity was more feasible in that the major objection advanced by leaders of völkisch sects who refused to follow one specific direction, namely, that it lacked Hitler's support, was now removed.

Chapter 6. THE REFOUNDING OF THE NSDAP IN WESTPHALIA, 1925 TO 1926.

The Refounding of the NSDAP.

The hope cherished by various völkisch-National Socialist leaders that Hitler, upon his release, would wave his magic wand and quickly establish order in the völkisch movement, was not realised. Hitler did not use his new freedom to act immediately, and some two months were to pass before he declared his intentions. The uncertainty produced by his seeming passivity nevertheless triggered off developments. It brought about the formal dissolution of the NSFB and the first indications of a regrouping in the völkisch movement before Hitler finally unveiled his plans at the end of February 1925. We have a clue to their nature from Dauser, one of the few minor völkisch figures to have access to Hitler in the first few weeks of 1925. At a meeting of the NSFB in Munich, held in January 1925, Dauser stated that the "Führer" had declared that he 'could not use the whole of the ballast provided by the GVG and the NSFP, and that he could use only "true National Socialists"'. ¹⁾ In the meantime, speculation was rife about Hitler's intentions, and the strains produced by Hitler's silence led to hasty action on the part of the DVFP element in the NSFB. It was the leadership of the former DVFP which tried to force the issue.

A conflict between the DVFP and the National Socialists in Prussia occurred at a conference of the regional organisations of the NSFB held on 17 January 1925, the discussions of which quickly came to Hitler's attention. ²⁾ The purpose of the meeting was, in the words of one of the participants, 'to present Hitler with a fait accompli, to keep Hitler out of the leadership'. As the meeting was dominated by a majority of former DVFP members, the small group of National Socialists present could do very little to influence the proceedings. ³⁾

¹⁾ Quoted by Horn, op. cit., p.211.

²⁾ Fobke to Volck, Göttingen, 2 February 1925: HA 44/899.

³⁾ Corswant-Cuntzow to Volck, 15 January 1925: HA 44/899; also in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.89-93.

The meeting was used by Wulle to launch a bitter attack on Hitler, who was accused of 'Ultramontanism', a damaging charge in the eyes of North German völkisch Protestants. Wulle pointed to the danger of Bavarian particularism and a possible conflict between the North and the South, and emphasized that he represented a decidedly Prussian policy. An even more hostile attitude was shown by another DVFP supporter, Dr Körner, who accused Hitler of being a pope and of having done nothing for the movement while the DVFP had done everything. The meeting ended the unity which had prevailed in the ranks of the Prussian NSFB. The resignation of the Ludendorff-von Graefe-Strasser triumvirate on 12 February 1925 was little more than a formality in the light of the divisions which had appeared in January. The division between the supporters of the old DVFP and the National Socialists became final on 17 February with the formation of the DVFB. This gave the members of the NSFB a straightforward choice. They could either join what was in effect a reconstituted DVFP, or await the expected reformation of the NSDAP.

The lifting of the ban on the NSDAP in Bavaria on 14 February allowed Hitler to make public his decision to refound the NSDAP. ⁴⁾ The new party was to be shaped according to the ideas laid down in "Mein Kampf", which envisaged '... concentration for the time being of all activity in a single place: Munich ... Formation of local groups only when the authority of the central leadership in Munich may be regarded as unquestionably recognised. Likewise the formation of district, county or provincial groups depends, not only on the need for them, but also on certainty that an unconditional recognition of the centre has been achieved.' ⁵⁾ These ideas were embodied in directives governing the reconstruction of the party published in the Völkischer Beobachter on 26 February 1925, which outlined the nature and structure of the new party. ⁶⁾ According to the article there were to be no profound changes in the guiding principles, programme,

⁴⁾ On the refounding of the party see Horn, op. cit., pp.210 ff.; Orlow, op. cit., pp.51 ff.. On the regional level there are accounts by Noakes, op. cit., pp.56 ff.; and Pridham, op. cit., pp.36 ff..

⁵⁾ A. Hitler, Mein Kampf, (translated by R. Manheim), London, 1969, p.316.

⁶⁾ Völkischer Beobachter, 26 February 1925: "Fundamental Regulations for the Re-formation of the NSDAP". Also in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.105-107.

tactics and organisation. The important difference from the old NSDAP was that the "Führerprinzip", which had previously been effective only in Bavaria, was now to be enshrined on the national level. Dissident elements were warned to keep away from the party, since those who were not prepared to submit themselves to the 'properly elected leadership' were deemed 'not fit to be in the ranks of the NSDAP'. Practical measures were set out to enforce control by the Munich party headquarters. This was to be the sole authority responsible for issuing enrolment forms and membership cards. It was made clear that every member was first and foremost under the control of the Munich party centre. Regional and local organisations were to follow where and as necessary; the fusion into 'organisational groups' was to be carried out 'organically'. 'The criterion here', it was stated, 'is not the division into Reichstag electoral districts but their suitability for propaganda, as well as the available leadership material'. In the creation of larger sub-groups the key figure was to be the leader. He came first, the organisation followed, not vice versa. Emphasized too was the fact that the organisation was not an end in itself but the means to an end, for 'it should only make possible the political agitation by the movement and create the organisational pre-requisites for the spread of enlightenment, which are absolutely necessary'. The guidelines outlining the function of the SA also emphasized the political nature it was to have in the future. The old role played by the SA during the earliest history of the party was revived. The new SA was to attend to the political tasks facing the movement and stay within the bounds of legality. The new party, as far as Hitler was concerned, was not to be characterised by the putschist and militarist tendencies of the pre-November 1923 period. The change of emphasis is easy enough to explain. Hitler could not afford to upset the authorities by too aggressive a posture and he was determined to gain power by legal means. The activist elements within the party had to be restricted in the light of the new circumstances in which the party operated. The putsch did nothing to change Hitler's ultimate objective, but it

taught him to be more practical and realistic in the choice of means by which it was to be achieved. On the occasion of the formal refounding of the NSDAP, at a party rally in Munich on 27 February 1925, Hitler repeated his determination to be the sole and unquestioned leader of the movement: 'I am not in the mood to have conditions prescribed for me as long as I am personally to carry the responsibility. And this responsibility I carry for everything that occurs within this movement.' 7) Hitler asked for one year in which to prove himself to his supporters and promised to resign if the movement failed under his leadership. 8)

The re-emergence of the NSDAP provided a new home for those within the NSFB who did not respond to the formation of the DVFB. Those groups which had remained outside the NSFB in 1924 and had constantly avowed their belief in Hitler had little option but to be guided by their emotions and subordinate themselves to him. For the GVG under Esser the dissolution of the organisation in March was only natural, and the branches everywhere transformed themselves into branches of the NSDAP. The leadership and leading bureaucrats of the party placed themselves at the disposal of Hitler, who rewarded their long-term support by using them in the reconstruction of the new party.

In Bavaria Hitler was able to establish control and support for himself quite quickly. In Northern Germany the independent "Directorate" fell apart with the resignation of the leading spirit of the movement, Dr A. Volck, on 12 January 1925. His instructions to the regional organisers to seek directives from Hitler gave the supporters of this pro-Nazi movement little choice concerning their future path. Indeed, in Göttingen and Hanover the NSDAP was unofficially refounded at the end of January, a month before Hitler made his intentions public. 9)

7) Hitler's speech reprinted (in an abbreviated form) in E. Klöss, Reden des Führers. Politik und Propaganda Adolf Hitlers 1922-1945, Munich, 1967, pp.44-54; quote from p.53.

8) Ibid., p.54.

9) Noakes, op. cit., pp.58-59.

The Westphalian reaction.

The adoration of Hitler, a mystical figure to the bulk of the National Socialist-völkisch membership of Westphalia, was widespread in the province. In some branches of the NSFB the devotion took on extreme forms. Its Hohenlimburg branch symbolised their devotion to Hitler by sending a Christmas parcel weighing some 22 lbs. to Landsberg in 1924, accompanied by the following note:

'Dear Adolf Hitler,

In the name of the party committee of the Hohenlimburg branch we send you a small Christmas gift, a witness to the fact that in the great German Fatherland, as also in our immediate homeland, hearts beat for you which are inseparably linked with you (in life and death) and the Reichsführerschaft. We hope that the day when you will be able to be in our midst once more is not too far away.

We Hohenlimburgers would consider it an honour to be able to greet you in our closed circle. Enjoy the things on the Day of Love. Let a small picture of our native land - our Westphalian Heidelberg - be for you a constant reminder and comfort in sad hours of the fact that German youth wants to share your fate. "One for all and all for one" - so it should and must be in future.

Your Hohenlimburger Boys.' 10)

Hitler's release and the resultant speculation concerning the future affected the rank and file as well as the party hierarchy in the post-December period. The Gau administration pursued the aim of continued unity and the preservation of the NSFB. The divisions which appeared in the party at the Prussian meeting of the NSFB were deplored by von Pfeffer. The Westphalian leader also opposed the attacks on Hitler made by Wulle and his supporters. When Wulle urged those present to ensure that Hitler should submit for the sake of "unity", von Pfeffer interjected heatedly that in that case he (Wulle) should provide the example and lay down his leadership. 11) Von Pfeffer joined the minority who declared themselves for Hitler at the meeting, and

10) Beck, op. cit., pp.392-393.

11) Corswant-Cuntzow to Volck, 15 January 1925: HA 44/899.

committed the Westphalian NSFB to follow Hitler.

The decision to support Hitler did not mean that von Pfeffer adopted an attitude of blind obedience to him. Very much the reverse is true. Von Pfeffer had his own ideas concerning future developments, and in a lengthy letter to Hitler at the end of January 1925 he outlined what he considered should be done by Hitler. Throughout the letter the Westphalian considerations which moved von Pfeffer emerge clearly.

'Heil Hitler!'

- (i) Westphalia fully shares your fundamental views. We also, in this extensive and largest industrial region of Germany, maintain that the revival of the Workers' Movement is our present task.
- (ii) But we believe that our present movement and organisation is perfectly adequate for this task, if only it is activated and used properly. A new political organisation is not necessary here. What is missing, however, is a trade union organisation or something on trade union lines to attract the mass of workers. Such an organisation must be created as rapidly as possible ... Such a new independent organisation would be right. New political organisations would be wrong.
- (iii) A new division in our movement would signify in the present circumstances a sad setback. Confusion and conflict undermine our image and our confidence. Inside and outside our ranks we would suffer a serious moral blow.
- (iv) The name "NSDAP", that is "Workers' Party", signifies a setback in relation to our present symbol of the Volkgemeinschaft, a fact which is also accepted in working class circles.
- (v) The description "Party" is also a bad drawback. Party signifies in the present period parliamentarianism ... We have fortunately not only overcome the disadvantages conveyed by such a description, but also emphasized throughout the Land our fundamental difference from party structures by means of continuous reference to our name. A name means more than one supposes. With the "party" label we propagate precisely the false Berlin policy of the DVFP, perhaps also of that Bavarian bloc formation, which you want to get rid of.

- (vi) A new organisation will be rejected by numerous valuable elements. To win those back who have left the party here in Westphalia is virtually impossible. The character and outlook of the people here forbid such chopping and changing, for whatever reasons.
- (vii) Yet another new name here will make us a laughing-stock. Nothing is held more in contempt by the North German than instability ... In the past there were two parties here, then we voted under the V-S-B label, then as NSFB. The last change damaged us considerably. Yet another change to "NSDAP" is unacceptable to all serious regional leaders in North Germany.
- If a change of name is unavoidable in Bavaria, then the retention of the name here is equally unavoidable. ...
- (viii) It would be appreciated here if General Ludendorff could now quietly free himself from the filth of day-to-day politics, into which he was forced by necessity as a result of your imprisonment. But if the situation should arise in which Ludendorff decided to withdraw altogether, then this would be extremely significant for many people. It was not only the act of 9 November which gave our movement such a pronounced upward swing and later prevented any significant decline, but also in the last analysis the unreserved involvement of Ludendorff.
- (ix) All these thoughts are conditioned by one consideration, namely that a policy of opposition will meet any trend towards parliamentarianism ...

von Pfeffer.' 12)

It is surprising, in view of von Pfeffer's participation in the Prussian conference of the NSFB in January, that he could still refer to a concern for a 'new division in our movement', for effectively this had already occurred. Though the DVFB and the NSDAP had not as yet emerged in public, it was hardly likely that the breach between Wulle-von Graefe and Hitler could be healed,

12) NSFB Gau Westphalia (von Pfeffer) to Hitler, Münster, 31 January 1925; in Beck, op. cit., pp.589-591. It is unlikely that the original bore the "Heil Hitler" form of address.

unless one side subordinated itself to the other, which was not a possibility in view of the highly charged emotions of the time. The concern of the Westphalian Nazis caused by uncertainties surrounding Hitler's relationship with Ludendorff is understandable. ¹³⁾ Von Pfeffer's relationship with Ludendorff had been cemented in the latter half of 1924 following Ludendorff's appointment of von Pfeffer in June 1924 to lead Gau Westphalia. In the first months of the NSFB's existence it had been Ludendorff's prestige and support which had allowed von Pfeffer to unify the majority of the National Socialist-völkisch supporters behind the new organisation. The legitimacy of his authority had rested on his connection with the General. Ludendorff had also strengthened his relationship with many of the rank and file supporters whom he had met at the public rallies he attended in Westphalia. The personal contact was significant, especially when it involved an oath of allegiance given by SA members to him personally. ¹⁴⁾

Views very similar to those of von Pfeffer were held by members at district and branch levels, though one cannot speak of a unanimity of outlook. A series of district meetings organised in February 1925 to ascertain the views of the lower leadership made one thing clear. On all sides the collapse of the unity of the NSFB as indicated by the January meeting was regretted and lamented. The reaction to the division was variable. Some leaders still hoped that a compromise could be worked out, while others went into an all-out attack against the von Graefe "direction". The Bochum district conference witnessed a passionate attack by Goebbels against the "DVFP", whose nature and inclination were declared to rule out any possibility of its being an associate 'of the young, powerful National Socialist Movement'. The Bochum leaders unanimously declared for Hitler and informed him of their trust and allegiance: 'The district conference of the NSFB, which met today on 7 February 1925 on the instruction of the Bochum district administration, have become

13) Hitler's relationship with Ludendorff became very ambiguous; see Horn, op. cit., pp.212 ff..

14) Police report, Münster, 7 November 1924: SAM VII - 64 Band I.

aware, through the speaker Dr Goebbels, that there is a possibility of a division within the movement. We beg you to work for a prevention of such a division. Should one nevertheless occur, we would like to make it clear that the district organisation, and the branches subordinated to it, stand united behind the old leader Adolf Hitler and promise him unchangeable loyalty and adherence to the end.' 15)

Such an unconditional surrender to Hitler was not forthcoming from the Lenne-Volme district. Here the district and branch leaders had their own ideas about future developments. Most of their views were close to those expressed by von Pfeffer:

'At the conference of branch leaders of the district Lenne-Volme (an area containing half a million "industrial" population) which took place on the 7th in Hagen, there was entire agreement among those present that the united völkisch movement which emerged at Weimar under the present description "NSFB" must remain intact ... in order to prevent a complete collapse of the whole movement.

If the name "NSFB" has become unsuitable for Bavaria, then Bavaria should form a regional organisation under the old description "NSDAP". An extension of this description to the whole Reich is, as far as we are concerned, a complete mistake.

In all other matters we share the views of Adolf Hitler without reservation. His top leadership (Spitzenführerschaft) is accepted on all sides, but only with the proviso that His Excellency Ludendorff must be kept in the movement under all circumstances, and that his past influence must also be exercised in the future. His Excellency Ludendorff has secured increasing sympathy from working class circles in this area because of his categorical repudiation of the circles surrounded by caste concepts and through his active intervention for our cause. Almost all the branch leaders have

15) NSFB Bezirksleitung Bochum, Kapp to Hitler, Bochum, 7 February 1925; in Beck, op. cit., pp.591-592.

emphasized that the movement would lose ground among the workers if His Excellency Ludendorff were to resign from the movement or possibly be pushed into the background.

If there are differences of opinion within our movement ... then these must be bridged over. Bavaria, Westphalia, Mecklenburg and all the German Gaue are so diverse in their political, economic and cultural aspects and in the character and attitude of their population, that a doctrinaire, rigid adherence to a specific programme will only create new arguments.

All völkisch elements in our movement are Pan-German, nationalist, socialist, freedom-loving and anti-parliamentarian. In these matters there can be no division. Through an exceptionally well-led movement united to attain these goals, victory is ours.' 16)

In spite of the conditions and reservations of important figures in the regional movement such as von Pfeffer and Grotehusmann, when the NSFB split in February 1925, they and their supporters gave their allegiance to Hitler. The position of the Westphalian völkisch leaders who felt themselves drawn towards Hitler rather than Wulle and von Graefe was made easier by the fact that Ludendorff, whose influence carried much weight in the province, was not involved in the foundation of the DVFB, so that the choice was not one of von Graefe-Ludendorff or Hitler, but the less difficult one of von Graefe or Hitler, with Ludendorff's attitude being equivocal. Von Pfeffer had already made clear his feelings concerning a von Graefe-Hitler confrontation at the January meeting of the Prussian NSFB.

The position taken by Gregor Strasser was also important in determining the attitude of the Westphalian leadership corps. After the collapse of the Reichsführerschaft, Strasser moved towards Hitler and reached agreement with him at some time between 12 and 21 February. 17) Strasser had established

16) Grotehusmann to Hitler, Hagen, 10 February 1925; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.591-592.

17) Noakes, op. cit., p.62.

strong connections with the Ruhr region and was relatively well-known in völkisch circles in Westphalia. He had spoken on behalf of the NSDAP in Rhineland-Westphalia as early as 1920, and had been especially active in the region from 1922 to 1924. Strasser was thus a name of some significance not only to the völkisch leaders, but also to the rank and file members.

It was Strasser who was authorised by Hitler to organise those elements of the NSFB which looked towards Munich. Strasser in turn called on von Pfeffer to organise a conference of the West German National Socialist movement, which met on 22 February 1925 at Hamm in Westphalia.¹⁸⁾ At the Hamm meeting the leaders of the regional organisations of Westphalia, Rhineland-North, Rhineland-South, Hanover, and Pomerania, along with over 100 former district and branch leaders of the NSFB and authorised representatives of the "old NSDAP" of the electoral districts of Koblenz-Trier, Cologne-Aachen, Düsseldorf-East and -West, Westphalia-North and -South, Hanover-East and -South, Braunschweig, Weser-Ems and Schleswig-Holstein, all 'solemnly promised anew their unchangeable loyalty and support to their Führer Adolf Hitler'.¹⁹⁾ At the meeting Strasser appointed von Pfeffer as leader of the Westphalian movement, subject to official approval by Hitler. This was a mere formality in the circumstances of the time. Those who declared themselves for Hitler were highly unlikely to be ignored when it came to the distribution of power within the party. Just as the regional leaders had little choice, once they had tied themselves to the Nazi cause, but to accept Hitler's ideas and style of leadership, so Hitler had little alternative in the spring of 1925 but to accept those who had carved out a local or regional position for themselves. Besides, in Westphalia, given the small size of the party, the available leadership material was too limited to provide alternatives. Hitler formally confirmed von Pfeffer in his new position in April and ordered him to carry

18) P. Hüttenberger, Die Gauleiter. Studie zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP, Stuttgart, 1969, p.20.

19) Gau Hanover (NSDAP) to Völkischer Beobachter, 23 February 1925, in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.104-105.

out the organisational build-up of the NSDAP in Westphalia. 20)

The Westphalian representatives who declared themselves for Hitler had remarkably little difficulty in swinging the rank and file membership behind them. With the re-formation of the NSDAP at the end of February, the bulk of the NSFB branches, along with the few GVG branches which had formerly worked against the NSFB, transformed themselves into NSDAP branches, often publicly announcing their devotion and allegiance to Hitler. In Bochum virtually the whole of the admittedly small NSFB membership joined the NSDAP, and both the Bochum branch organisations and the district administration survived intact, the DVFB failing to make any impact in the area. 21) In Unna the pro-Nazi feelings of the local branch had already been demonstrated in January. In a letter to Esser on 19 January the branch declared its allegiance to Hitler, stating that it 'was only waiting for his orders'. On 1 March a letter to the Munich party centre congratulated the "Führer" on his first public speech since his release and announced that the whole of the membership had joined the NSDAP, Gau Westphalia. 22)

In the industrial towns of the Ruhr the National Socialist appeal was traditionally stronger than that of the more bourgeois DVFP/DVFB, which never made any significant impact on the largely working class population. In the Ruhr towns the völkisch movement had a more pronounced proletarian character, and "socialism" figured more prominently in völkisch propaganda. 23) At the time of the split the bulk of the membership supported the refounded NSDAP, since german-völkisch support within the NSFB had never been great. The situation was different, however, in the areas surrounding the Ruhr industrial complex, especially in parts of the Regierungsbezirk of Minden, where the DVFP had considerable support and influence in the few NSFB branches active

20) NSDAP Munich to von Pfeffer, Munich, 3 April 1925: HA 8/165.

21) Beck, op. cit., p.65.

22) Ibid., p.359.

23) P. Hüttenberger, 'Die Anfänge der NSDAP im Westen', in W. Först, (ed.), Zwischen Ruhrkampf und Wiederaufbau, op. cit., p.55 and pp.62 ff..

in the area. In the Bielefeld NSFB the most important factor which determined the choice between the NSDAP and the DVFB was the age of the members. Virtually all the younger members opted for the NSDAP. At a meeting of the NSFB to determine the attitude of the membership the line of division was drawn between 'the SA, which as usual supported Hitler en bloc, and the "civilian" members, with the exception of four persons, who supported the DVFB'. The new NSDAP branch, formed on 5 March 1925 with a membership of 35, had a very young membership. They were dubbed "The Stupid Party of Youths" by their political opponents, the average age of the members being well below twenty. Those who were 'over twenty already counted among the older members within the party'. The average age of the first female members of the party at that time was sixteen. 24)

The re-establishment of the NSDAP in Westphalia saw the emergence of a widespread network of branches during March and April 1925. The newly appointed Gauleiter von Pfeffer was immediately active in appointing or confirming district and local leaders, before Munich's official recognition reached him at the beginning of April. 25) Von Pfeffer needed little prompting or outside guidance. He simply applied the experience gained in 1924. The major problem facing him was not how to handle his subordinates but how best to adjust to the new vigour displayed by the Munich party centre. Problems arose primarily because of Munich's insistence on the fulfilment of the organisational measures first announced by Hitler at the end of February. Munich's determination to control regional and local organisations is evidenced by the rapidity with which the new party secretary Bouhler tried to put into effect the newly adopted organisational principles. In Westphalia, as elsewhere in Northern

24) M. Hiemisch, Der nationalsozialistische Kampf um Bielefeld. Die Geschichte der N.S.D.A.P., Bielefeld, Bielefeld, 1933, pp.7-9.

25) Wagner, district leader of the Bochum area, received confirmation of his "position", to take effect from the beginning of April, at the beginning of March 1925 - Wagner to Munich, Bochum, 18 March 1925; HA 8/165. Josef Wagner, b. 1899 in Algringen, Lorraine; 1917-1919 military service; 1919-1920 completed Teachers' Training Course in Fulda; 1921-1926 employed by the Bochumer Verein, then Vereinigte Stahlwerke. From 1922 onwards active in völkisch movement; 1924 appointed district leader for Bochum region NSFB by von Pfeffer; same position in NSDAP 1925-1928. 1.10.1928-31.12.1930 Gauleiter of Westphalia; 1.1.1931-1934 Gauleiter of Westphalia-South. Party Number 16,951.

Germany, this required a degree of adjustment on the part of regional leaders used to a great degree of autonomy. The implications of Hitler's proclamation of the "Führerprinzip" were made quite clear by Bouhler's bureaucratic activity: accountability, surveillance and control were implicit in the new system. This was something new to von Pfeffer and the northern leaders in general. Before the collapse of the pre-putsch NSDAP, Munich party headquarters had interfered little in the affairs of the more distant party organisations and had had very little control over branch and party activity in general. In consequence the branches had developed around dedicated individuals who were often a law unto themselves and whose personal attitudes generally determined any development. These independent leaders responded more to the needs of their immediate environment and less to the directives which occasionally emerged from Munich. In Westphalia the scattered branches worked independently not only from Munich, but also more often than not from each other. With the failure of the putsch and the collapse of the Munich party headquarters the autonomy of regional and local organisations increased yet further. The leaders who acquired authority in this situation formulated their own concepts, and however sincere they were in their admiration of Hitler, however enthusiastic in their support for National Socialism within the völkisch camp, their independent spirit was strengthened and their hope of influencing future developments was encouraged. Even before Hitler's release northern leaders engaged in what turned out to be wishful thinking as to the path their leader should follow on his release.²⁶⁾ Von Pfeffer was no different in this respect. His long letter to Hitler of January 1925 was but one of many attempting to influence general developments.

The revived NSDAP under Hitler's dictatorial control allowed little scope, initially in theory and increasingly in practice, for a continuation of independent thought and action. The 'Basic Instructions for the Refounding of

26) For the attitudes of the leaders of the "Directorate" see Noakes, op. cit., pp.57 ff..

the NSDAP' made it clear that the party was to be rigidly controlled by the Munich centre and that there was no room for any autonomy of the Gaue. Tension arose subsequently on a seemingly innocuous question, that of the issue of membership cards. In practice, Munich's insistence on full control and authority over this raised the fundamental issue of regional and local administrative autonomy. Resentment against the implementation of new directives relating to this matter was widespread, especially in northern and central Germany, and it took Bouhler a considerable time to enforce central authority. Few Gauleiter were prepared to accept this aspect of the centralisation process, and most attempted to circumvent the directives. The Gaue of Hanover, Göttingen, Hessen-Nassau and Schleswig-Holstein went so far as to approach Bouhler jointly in April 1925, putting forward the argument that in view of the stable organisation which had developed outside Bavaria rigid centralisation was no longer a necessity. ²⁷⁾ Munich reacted strongly against such attitudes and insisted on the observation of the new rules. One can understand the policy of the Munich party administration in that more than just Munich's control over the regional organisations was at stake. There was also the financial aspect: the collection of the enrolment fee (fixed at 1 Mark), which was to be paid by all members regardless of whether they had been party members before, and of membership dues, was essential to oil the wheels of the bureaucratic machinery which was being constructed at the centre. ²⁸⁾ The reluctance of the Gauleiter to implement the Munich directives can also be understood. Much secretarial and organisational work for the Gau and branch administrations was involved, at a time when the party was beginning to reorganise itself at every level. Then there was the resistance of the existing membership

²⁷⁾ Noakes, op. cit., pp.65-66.

²⁸⁾ Bouhler, in his efforts to convince Ripke, Gauleiter of Rhineland-North, of the necessity of fulfilling Munich demands pointed out that the efficiency of the Munich centre, and its existence, depended on finance; see Bouhler to Axel Ripke, Munich, 15 April 1925: BAK Sammlung Schumacher, 203.

to be considered. Party members of long standing resented the loss of their old numbers and felt affronted by the re-enrolment procedure. The Gauleitung of Westphalia did not hasten to conform to the new requirements, and it took considerable time for von Pfeffer to accept the necessity of the procedure. As a result of a visit to Munich, which allowed him to see at first hand the whole of the party apparatus, he was finally persuaded of the need for central control of the issue of membership cards and the 'other diverse demands' made by the party headquarters. 29)

Membership issue was not the only source of friction which existed between the individual Gaue and the Munich leadership. The northern Gaue, almost traditionally by 1925, looked with some misgivings at the policies pursued by Munich. The Westphalian leadership echoed sentiments current generally in northern and central Germany, which were not in line with Munich thinking. Von Pfeffer above all shared the feeling expressed by a number of northern leaders that the Munich leadership failed to realise the totally different position in which the party was operating in northern Germany. He had already made it clear to Munich that what was suitable for the Bavarian movement was not necessarily a requirement in a Gau which differed markedly in its social, political, and economic structure from the Bavarian environment. 30) The most obvious and crucial difference between Bavaria and Westphalia and the adjacent Gaue was that they were operating in an industrial area. This meant that if the NSDAP was to make any significant headway in Rhineland-Westphalia it had to emphasize the socialist angle of the party programme, and preferably compete with the Left by forming a National Socialist trade union. Interest in trade unionism is evident even in the earliest history of the National Socialist-völkisch groups active in Westphalia. As early as 1922 there had been an

29) The Westphalian example was used by Bouhler to bring the leadership of Rhineland-North into line. The Gau administration was still resisting Munich's demand to control membership cards. Bouhler to Gauleitung Rhineland-North, Munich, 24 October 1925; BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

30) Von Pfeffer to Hitler, Münster, 31 January 1925; in Beck, op. cit., pp.589-591. See also the attitude of Volck at the time of his resignation, Noakes, op. cit., pp.57-58.

attempt by the völkisch movement established in the mining town of Buer to compete in the 'factory committee elections' held in the local pits. ³¹⁾ The leader of the small GVG branch established in Dortmund in 1924 had also shown interest in the trade union question. ³²⁾ Von Pfeffer too appreciated the need for an effective Nazi trade union to further the NSDAP in his area and made this clear in his correspondence with Hitler. Hitler did not commit himself on the trade union question and for a long time his position remained ambiguous. Though not unsympathetic to the union concept, Hitler's reservations were many. Above all, he feared the ideological and organisational implications trade unionism would involve. ³³⁾ By failing to give clear guidelines on this issue, a certain degree of antagonism was generated between Hitler and several northern leaders.

Another question which exercised von Pfeffer and several northern leaders in 1925 was the important issue of electoral participation. On this matter too, Hitler was vague and contradictory. In general, the Nazi leaders of the northern Gaue viewed the parliamentary nature of the new DVFB with contempt, and advocated the old National Socialist line of non-involvement for both tactical and ideological reasons. ³⁴⁾ Von Pfeffer, though less dogmatic than the leaders in adjacent Gaue, also wanted the NSDAP to distance itself from the 'parliamentary morass'. The knowledge that Hitler had changed his mind on the question of participation in elections was not well received by some Nazi groups in northern Germany.

Thus on several issues the attitudes in the North differed from those of Munich. This led to increasing disenchantment with the party leadership generated by a feeling of frustration when it dawned on the northern leaders that their chances of influencing Hitler and the development of the newly created

31) "Lagemeldung", 7 April 1922: SAM I PA/271.

32) J. Esser to GVG Munich, Dortmund, 9 October 1924; GVG to J. Esser, Munich, 17 November 1924: BAK NS I/410.

33) Orlow, op. cit., pp.64-65. On the relationship between National Socialism and trade unionism see H.-G. Schumann, Nationalsozialismus und Gewerkschaftsbewegung, Hannover-Frankfurt, 1958, pp.30 ff..

34) Noakes, op. cit., pp.67 ff..

NSDAP were negligible. Collectively, this frustration sharpened the attitudes of the northern leaders towards the Munich party administration. Added to the general antagonism on organisational and ideological matters, there was also their widespread dislike of Esser and Streicher, who figured prominently in the affairs of the party, a dislike shared by both the leaders of the old "Directorate" and those actively engaged in the former Reichsführerschaft. Despite the lack of a united front on all these matters, the various differences with Munich led to the formation of an organisation which was to present a serious challenge to Hitler's authority and control, and a danger to the unity of the NSDAP: the AG, an organisation in which the Westphalian Gau was to play a supporting role.

The Consolidation of Gau Westphalia.

The gradual integration of Gau Westphalia into the national party structure was accompanied by continuous efforts by von Pfeffer to enforce his authority over the regional party, to unify and mould the Gau administration, and to expand the influence of the NSDAP in the region. The construction of a vertical regional organisational structure was especially important in 1925 due to the relatively rapid expansion of the membership of the Westphalian Nazi movement which had to be efficiently and effectively controlled and integrated.

The nucleus of the "new" NSDAP was the "old" NSFB. In Westphalia as a whole the NSDAP emerged as the dominant völkisch movement at the time of the break-up of the NSFB. The bulk of the organisation and the party hierarchy joined the NSDAP, and very little of the strength of the NSFB was lost to the main völkisch rival, the DVFB. This allowed the NSDAP to secure a much more dominant position in the province than within Prussia as a whole. ³⁵⁾ The

35) "Aus der Rechtsbewegung", report, Berlin, 8 May 1925: "In Preussen und in den übrigen norddeutschen Staaten dürfte die DVFB den grösseren Teil der Anhänger des völkischen Gedankens in ihren Organisationen zusammenfassen ..."; in HA 69/1509. In the adjacent Regierungsbezirke to the North and East the situation was much less favourable for the National Socialists; see Noakes, op. cit., pp.81 ff.. In Schleswig-Holstein only the Flensburg branch joined the NSDAP; see Stoltenberg, op. cit., p.142.

advantage this gave to the movement was inestimable, especially in view of the fact that the Gauleitung could concentrate on reinforcing the organisation without wasting its energy and limited resources in a struggle for supremacy with the DVFB. The damage such "contests" could do was only too evident in the few towns where a confrontation between the NSDAP and the DVFB did occur. In Soest the split in the NSFB resulted in an especially bitter struggle, caused primarily by the clash of personalities among the leaders of the newly formed parties. Two blocs appeared in the town in the spring of 1925. One, led by the former NSFB branch leader Kuske, was drawn towards the DVFB; the other, under the former NSFB treasurer Hemmer, wanted an immediate fusion with the NSDAP. Hemmer had the worst of the dispute since the bulk of the NSFB membership supported Kuske. The Nazi supporters were unable to win over the majority. It took virtually a year to establish a small NSDAP branch in the town. Established in December 1925, the branch attracted a mere eleven of the seventy strong former NSFB membership.³⁶⁾ But even this effort proved short-lived, for in 1926 the branch membership declined to three; the movement virtually collapsed and until 1928 it led a very shadowy existence in the town.³⁷⁾

A similar situation developed in the Siegen area, where the local völkisch leader Windfelder successfully agitated against the NSDAP and prevented the formation of a Nazi branch in Siegen itself. Windfelder and his DVFB members were able to block the Nazi effort by successfully projecting the idea that Hitler, because of his Catholic background, had betrayed the völkisch cause to Rome.³⁸⁾ In a solidly Protestant area the accusation was very damaging, and sufficient to keep the National Socialists in the background. In Hagen the DVFB also proved itself an active opponent, though here the constant conflicts between numerous völkisch leaders in 1924 had created a situation in which it was impossible for either völkisch movement to make any headway in 1925. The constant clashes and bickering led to a general disenchantment with the völkisch

36) Beck, op. cit., p.359.

37) Ibid., pp.359-360.

38) Beck, op. cit., pp.412-413.

cause in the town. In 1925 the NSDAP, formerly a considerable power in the area, hardly existed.³⁹⁾ The DVFB did not benefit from the situation. The DVFB leader Wulle could only draw about a hundred people to a public meeting held in March 1925, in contrast to the meetings of 1924 at which high attendances of a thousand or more had been achieved.⁴⁰⁾ In Münster, seat of the Gauleitung, friction also arose between National Socialists and völkisch groups formerly represented in the NSFB, and the Nazi movement lost momentum.⁴¹⁾ The situation was further complicated by a conflict between von Pfeffer and the former business manager of the NSFB, Gärtner. This led to a lot of mud-slinging and character assassination which created tensions in the local völkisch camp and spilled over to affect the regional movement.⁴²⁾

Fortunately for the Gauleitung such conflicts with völkisch rivals were few in Westphalia and did not add significantly to the problems facing von Pfeffer. The latter's appointment as Gauleiter by Gregor Strasser at the Hamm meeting on 22 February 1925 placed him in a strong position in that Hitler's authority could be used to legitimise his own authority as leader of the Westphalian movement. This proved much more effective in rallying all Nazi elements than the 'authorisation' derived from Ludendorff in the latter half of 1924. Von Pfeffer's initial task was to thread together the various Nazi sections throughout the province and give some semblance of order and direction to the movement. The geographic extent of the Gau provided a basic problem, especially after the Regierungsbezirk of Osnabrück was ceded to von Pfeffer at the Harburg meeting of the northern NSDAP leaders on 22 March 1925.⁴³⁾ To overcome this difficulty, von Pfeffer used the same organisational principle he had employed as Landesverbandführer of the NSFB: he divided the Gau into districts, confirming the existing regional leaders

39) Police report, Hagen, 5 May 1925; SAM I PA/398.

40) Police report, Hagen, 26 March 1925; SAM I PA/281.

41) Police report, Münster, 30 September 1925; SAM VII - 2 Band 4.

42) Report by the Oberpräsident, Münster, 25 June 1925; SAM VII - 64 Band I.

43) Noakes, op. cit., p.63.

where these had emerged, and elsewhere waiting for suitable individuals to secure a leading position before appointing them.⁴⁴⁾ The establishment of the rudimentary sub-Gau organisation coincided with a marked expansion in the numerical strength of the party and the appearance of a sizeable number of branches within the Gau. 1925 and 1926 were rewarding years for the National Socialists of the Rhenish-Westphalian region, which became one of the major growth areas of the NSDAP. By December 1925 the Ruhr region was being singled out (along with Upper Silesia and Saxony) as an area in which the Nazis had achieved 'undeniable organisational success'.⁴⁵⁾ In 1926 it was also considered a region in which the Nazi movement had a strong presence based on 'a lively organisation and much activity and agitation', though by then the momentum of 1925 had been lost and 'the results achieved by these efforts ... are not overwhelming ...'.⁴⁶⁾ The developments of 1925 to 1926 have to be kept in perspective. The expansion of the NSDAP in Westphalia and in the Ruhr in general, significant as it was, started from a low level, and despite its real growth the party continued to remain a fringe development in the overall context of the political scene. The importance of the period 1925-1926 is that the party entrenched itself, consolidated its position and constructed a relatively disciplined minority political movement dedicated to the Nazi "idea" and the embodiment of the "idea", Adolf Hitler.

The growth of the NSDAP was not uniform within the Gau. With few exceptions, the strength of the movement lay in the urbanised, industrialised areas, especially of the Ruhr basin. Here the largest and most active branches developed in the course of 1925; Bochum, Bottrop, Buer, Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen, Hattingen, Herne, Osterfeld, Recklinghausen and Witten all had branches of some importance. Significantly, these towns lay within the occupied zone of

44) Gau Westphalia was ultimately composed of 10 districts: Arnsberg (Dr H. Teipel); Bielefeld (N. Viereck, then F. Homann); Bochum (J. Wagner); Detmold (K. Herdejost); Hagen (Dr H. Nieland); Hamm (Dr Hurlbrinck); Lenne-Volme (B. Schüller, then H. Vetter); Osnabrück (E. Griesbrand); Rheine (B. Hartmann); Siegen (E. Walter).

45) "Lage der NSDAP", report, Berlin, 21 December 1925; HA 69/1509.

46) "Lagebericht des Reichskommissars", Berlin, 19 June 1926; copy in SAD MI IP/624.

the Ruhr region, the presence of French and Belgian troops giving a certain fillip to the völkisch-nationalist cause. Following the withdrawal of the occupying forces in the course of 1925, which made it possible for the NSDAP to organise itself openly, the party obtained new recruits thanks to the nationalist euphoria in the immediate post-occupation period. ⁴⁷⁾ Another factor which helps to explain the success achieved by the Nazis in Western Westphalia was that Josef Wagner, district leader for much of the occupied area, was the most able and active Nazi organiser in Westphalia.

By far the largest branch was that of Hattingen, a small town with a population of 10,000 sandwiched between Bochum and Essen, which had a comparatively long history of völkisch activity. Although administratively part of the province of Westphalia, Hattingen was at that time part of the Gau Rhineland-North, and one of its star performers. In December 1925 the branch accounted for over 60 per cent of the newly enrolled members of the Gau. ⁴⁸⁾ In 1926 the branch continued to grow owing to the special attention it received from the Ruhr Gauleitung. ⁴⁹⁾ Sizeable branches such as Hattingen, and to a lesser degree Bochum, which could also boast a membership of over 100, were exceptions even in an area in which the NSDAP was most active. The bulk of the branches were very small, having memberships below the 50 mark. Elsewhere in the province, the Nazis struggled to make an impression. In the Bielefeld and Arnsberg regions, the influential district leaders Homann and Teipel were able to develop some momentum. Homann used Bielefeld as a base from which to operate, and was the driving force behind the establishment in 1925 of a few new branches in the Protestant counties to the north. His greatest success was the creation of the Minden branch, founded in December

47) The boost given to the NSDAP following the end of the occupation is noted by contemporary observers - see police report, Gelsenkirchen, 14 January 1926; SAM VII - 64 Band I. On Hattingen, see Beck, op. cit., p.219. The Witten branch tripled its membership following the end of the occupation; Beck, op. cit., p.325.

48) Munich PL to GL Rhineland-North, December 1925 - of 460 newly enrolled members, 290 were from Hattingen; BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

49) Orlow, op. cit., p.91.

1925 with a membership of 25. ⁵⁰⁾ The Nazi influence south of Bielefeld was negligible, almost zero, the strong Catholicism of the southern counties of the Regierungsbezirk of Minden restricting any development. That it was possible to achieve some success in areas of strong Catholicism was demonstrated by Teipel in the Arnsberg district. He was able to establish a number of branches in counties with a predominant Catholic population. Whether the membership of these came from the Protestant minority or whether Catholics were also involved is not clear. In general, the Westphalian NSDAP was weakly represented in the predominantly Catholic counties. In counties where the Catholic population were living in an agrarian setting, Nazism had even less success in the mid-twenties. In the Regierungsbezirk of Münster, with its large Catholic population, the NSDAP could only establish a foothold in Münster and Rheine, the rest of the branches within the Regierungsbezirk lying in the counties forming part of the Ruhr industrial belt. ⁵¹⁾

Despite the patchy geographical distribution of party branches, the National Socialists were able to make a much deeper impression on Westphalia in the first year following the re-formation of the party than had been the case in the years before. Contemporary police reports reflect a certain degree of astonishment at the constancy and intensity of effort by Nazi branches. What amazed more than one police observer was the persistence of branches which continued to organise, publicise and hold meetings which were not well attended. The Gelsenkirchen police concluded: 'It can be said of the majority of the supporters of National Socialism that they are fanatically committed to their ideas ...'. ⁵²⁾ The continual effort and agitation emanating from the Nazi party seemed to indicate a strength and numerical support which occasionally misled the police observers, who ascribed a much greater following to Nazi branches than they possessed. Thus the Recklinghausen

50) Homann to GL Münster i./W., Bielefeld, 17 December 1925; BAK NS I/338.

51) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Münster, 2 November 1925; report by the Landrat, Steinfurt, 27 October 1925; SAM VII - 64 Band I.

52) Police report, Gelsenkirchen, 30 March 1926; SAM Nr. 2076.

police estimated in October 1925 that the strength of the NSDAP in Recklinghausen, Buer and Bottrop numbered respectively 70, 90 and 150.⁵³⁾ The membership figures reached by these branches by May 1926 assuming no radical decline had occurred since October, fell very much short of such numbers, Recklinghausen having a mere 29 members, Buer 46, and Bottrop 35.⁵⁴⁾ In Hamm the police similarly overstated the membership of the movement, given as 87 shortly before the official party figures showed a membership of only 12.⁵⁵⁾ Such overestimates were not uncommon in the 1925 period. It took some time before the authorities secured a more exact and realistic picture of the NSDAP, the result of the penetration of police informers into the Nazi apparatus.

The great efforts made by the NSDAP hierarchy to expand and cover Westphalia with a network of branches, at a time of organisational reconstruction at Gau, district and local levels, were supported by limited financial resources. The financial situation of the Gauleitung was affected strongly by the centralisation efforts of Munich, especially party headquarters' determination to secure its share of the membership dues. Munich no longer tolerated the misappropriation of its share of funds for regional activity. In this new situation it became impossible for the Gauleitung to avoid fulfilling its financial obligations to the Bouhler-Schwarz machine. For the Gauleiter of Westphalia the end of autonomy created several problems. The old habit of using the bulk of available cash to further the regional effort was no longer feasible. Von Pfeffer needed some persuasion on this point, but he at least attempted to meet Munich's demands by the autumn of 1925. In the adjoining Gau Rhineland-North, Goebbels and Kaufmann were less responsive to the constant reminders from the Partelleitung of their financial obligations. They defended their lack of contributions to Munich by pointing out that they

53) Police report, Recklinghausen, 23 October 1925: SAM VII - 64 Band I.

54) "Gau Ruhr Ortsgruppen Mitgliederstand", 31 May 1926: BAK NS I/342.

55) Police report, Hamm, 8 March 1926: SAM I PA/279.

themselves were only securing the membership dues irregularly, and that they could only continue to work at all in their area by using private donations from a few individuals. ⁵⁶⁾ If the Gau Rhineland-North was able to keep afloat financially in 1925 by refusing to meet national party demands, von Pfeffer's expedient was to accumulate debts, which stood at around 16,000 Marks at the time of Gau Westphalia's fusion with Gau Rhineland-North. ⁵⁷⁾

Lack of cash, though by far the greatest handicap to the effectiveness of the Gauleitung, was not the only problem facing von Pfeffer. A major difficulty lay also in the nature of the Gauleitung itself. The use of the term "Gauleitung" in the 1925-1926 period is perhaps misleading in that it conjures up a vision of the extensive horizontal bureaucratic organisation which came to characterise the Gau administrations of the NSDAP from the late nineteen-twenties onwards. The actual "physical" structure of the Gauleitung of Westphalia was primitive by later standards, and the term "Gauleitung" referred to a party organisation with limited resources, the techniques and functions of which only gradually emerged. In the Westphalian context the Gauleitung meant little more than the Gauleiter assisted by a very small clerical staff. The Gauleiter, his deputy, a party treasurer and party secretary and their deputies, and the head of the Gau SA were the full complement of the party officials in the Gauleitung of Westphalia. The facilities at the disposal of the individuals at the head of the regional organisation were restricted to the financial resources of the individual party functionaries concerned. Even at Gau level, the Nazi movement of Westphalia was unable to sustain a regional party headquarters or office facilities. Von Pfeffer followed the usual practice of the early period by running the Gau virtually as a one man band with "office" facilities situated at his home, which was also the Gau party headquarters. Radical improvements in the situation of the Gauleitung were to be one of the chief features of the more powerful Gau Ruhr, which tapped wider

56) Goebbels & Kaufmann to PL, Elberfeld, 22 October 1925: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

57) Tyrell, op. cit., footnote, p.181.

financial resources able to sustain a much grander party headquarters.

Gau Westphalia and the AG. 58)

The initiative to form a closer working association embracing the north German Gaue emanated from Gregor Strasser, who came to this decision some time during the summer of 1925. 59) In the first half of the year Strasser had been actively involved in the reorganisation of the NSDAP in northern Germany. Though Hitler's "delegate", he had become increasingly disenchanted with the "Munich clique" surrounding Hitler. Ideologically Strasser felt much more at home in the company of new leaders who emerged in the Ruhr region. At Elberfeld, the organisational centre of Gau Rhineland-North, the young Goebbels and Kaufmann were active in forcing the pace towards a greater emphasis on the socialist aspect of National Socialism, a trend which reflected Strasser's own inclinations. 60) Kaufmann and Goebbels strengthened their position in Elberfeld in the summer of 1925 by bringing about the suspension of the Gauleiter of Rhineland-North Axel Ripke, on a charge of embezzling party funds. Ripke, by going on a self-imposed vacation in July, left the field open for Goebbels and Kaufmann to take over the leadership of the Gau. They evolved the novel form of a collegiate rule. As late as September the position of the respective parties was far from clear, however, despite the fact that Ripke, at the beginning of his 'three months' retirement', had authorised Goebbels to control the affairs of the Gau until the situation had been clarified. 61)

It was to the Elberfeld group that Strasser turned for support in his efforts to create a movement which would be more independent of the Munich

58) The Arbeitsgemeinschaft der nord- und west-deutschen Gaue der NSDAP (AG) has been analysed by various authorities, especially by R. Kühnl, Die Nationalsozialistische Linke 1925-1930, Meisenheim am Glan, 1966, pp.5 ff.; W. Horn, op. cit., pp.232 ff.; P. Hüttenberger, op. cit., pp.26 ff.; J. Nyomarkay, op. cit., pp.78 ff.; and J. Noakes, op. cit., pp.68 ff..

59) Horn, op. cit., p.232.

60) Noakes, op. cit., p.70.

61) Goebbels and Kaufmann to PL NSDAP, Elberfeld, 29 September 1925; BAK Sammlung Schumacher. The letter calls on the PL to solve the problem of Ripke, and asks for Hitler's withdrawal of Ripke's authorisation as Gauleiter.

party headquarters, and in which "socialism" would play a more prominent role. At a meeting at Elberfeld on 20 August 1925 Strasser outlined his plan to 'organise the entire West'. The 'Westblock' was designed to counter-balance the 'abominable and wretched management of the central office'. The new organisation was to have a voice of its own in the projected 'Nationalsozialistische Briefe' to be published by Strasser, with Goebbels as editor. The paper was to be used as a 'weapon against those sclerotic bosses in Munich'. ⁶²⁾ In the months following Strasser's relationship with the Elberfeld group was to blossom into one of friendship based on a mutual conspiracy against the Munich party centre. The enthusiasm of the tireless Goebbels in the shaping and organisation of the projected northern group was to be a major factor in the realisation of the plans briefly outlined by Strasser in August. Much of the "donkey work" was carried out by Goebbels, who almost immediately began to secure more support for the idea.

Gau Westphalia under von Pfeffer was the first to be approached by Goebbels, probably at the beginning of August 1925. Goebbels outlined the whole 'complex of the West German AG' to von Pfeffer, with whom 'complete agreement' was reached at the end of August. ⁶³⁾ Von Pfeffer was drawn into the "intrigue" and participated in the meeting held on 10 September at Hagen, at which all the Gauleiter of northern Germany were present, with the exception of those of Berlin, East Prussia, Silesia and Hessen. ⁶⁴⁾ As Gregor Strasser was unable to attend, due to the illness of his mother, Dr Elbrechter (a friend of Kaufmann) took the chair, and the assembled leaders listened to Goebbels, who briefly outlined Strasser's plans. These were received well by all except Ley, Gauleiter of Rhineland-North, who had some reservations although he too was finally won over. ⁶⁵⁾ Ley sensed perhaps the separatist nature of the AG, and as a devoted follower of Hitler opposed any movement away from Munich. ⁶⁶⁾

62) The Early Goebbels Diaries. The Journal of J. Goebbels from 1925-1926, ed. by H. Heiber, tr. by O. Watson, London, 1962; entry 21 August 1925. (In future Goebbels, Diary).

63) Goebbels to G. Strasser, Elberfeld, 31 August 1925: BAK NS I/340.

64) Account of the meeting by Fobke in Jochmann, op. cit., pp.208 ff..

65) Goebbels to Strasser, Elberfeld, 11 September 1925: BAK NS I/340.

66) Jochmann, op. cit., p.209.

At Hagen Strasser's ideas were realised. The majority present at the meeting were prepared to be included in the organisation, which was to be called the 'Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Nord- und Westdeutschen Gaue der N.S.D.A.P.'. It was to be under the leadership of Strasser. Goebbels suggested that the 'well-equipped Elberfeld office' should become the organisational centre. The publication of the 'Nationalsozialistische Briefe' was also generally approved, and all pledged themselves to secure as large an outlet for the paper in their Gaue as possible. 67) Strasser and Goebbels busied themselves with the framing of the AG's statutes, which finally emerged in October 1925. 68) Although section four of the statutes protected the association against possible accusations of separatism by stating that the 'AG and the 'NS Briefe' exist with the express agreement of Adolf Hitler', the organisation had certain features which distinguished it from the Munich party. Most significant was the egalitarian nature of the AG, markedly different from anything in the NSDAP under Hitler's Führerprinzip. Within the organisation the Gauleiter were equals, and Strasser was at most the primus inter pares. The AG's democratic structure must inevitably have been seen as an affront by Hitler, who was engaged on enforcing the idea of command and obedience within the NSDAP. He must also have been concerned by the expansion of the AG, which rapidly included the whole leadership of the north German NSDAP, and the extension of its influence, which reached beyond the confines of northern Germany. 69) Developments at the first conference of the fully constituted AG in Hanover on 22 November 1925 also gave food for thought to the Munich party centre. Although the conference started with a formal declaration of loyalty to Hitler, it turned to matters which implied a direct challenge to Hitler's leadership

67) Goebbels to Strasser, Elberfeld, 11 September 1925: BAK NS I/340.

68) "Statuten der AG der Nord- und Westdeutschen Gaue der NSDAP", signed by Strasser and Goebbels, Landshut/Elberfeld, 9 October 1925: BAK NS I/340. The statutes are reprinted in J. Noakes & J. Fridham, (eds.), Documents on Nazism 1919-1945, London, 1974, pp.74-75.

69) Good connections were established with the Gauleiter of Württemberg and Baden, who were also recipients of the circulars emanating from Elberfeld; see Kühnl, op. cit., p.17.

and authority. Apart from approving the statutes of the AG as drawn up by Strasser and Goebbels, the meeting decided to levy special dues on the AG Gaue and to formulate drafts revising the party programme of 1920. 70) On both the last points the AG was moving into dangerous water. The financial levy was designed to build up the organisational centre at Elberfeld and to create a separate party organisation which duplicated that of Munich. As to the revision of the party programme, the dangers this involved must have been clear to all concerned. It was a direct challenge to Hitler, who had constantly declared the inviolable nature of the 1920 programme. His determination on this point had been apparent as recently as August 1925 in the statutes of the 'Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterverein', in which the party programme was referred to in two places. In section 2 it was stated that 'this programme is unalterable'; in section 12 the text read 'Name, programme and direction of the movement cannot be changed', with Hitler's own amendment 'except with the agreement of all members'. 71)

Strasser was already working on his programme draft before the Hanover meeting was held. Along with Goebbels and Kaufmann, he was authorised by the conference to work on further drafts which were to be the subject of another meeting also to be held in Hanover in January 1926. Strasser's draft, worked out without Hitler's knowledge, was distributed by Goebbels to the Gau leaders of the AG and to a few others, including Ludendorff and Rosenberg, on 11 December 1925. All were asked to give their views on the contents. 72) Goebbels also 'worked hard on his draft', which was to be ready in manuscript form by the time of the January conference. 73) Strasser's draft did not

70) Noakes, op. cit., p.74; Kühnl, op. cit., pp.17-18.

71) Horn, op. cit., p.234.

72) Kühnl, op. cit., p.18. The text of the Strasser draft is included in Kühnl's article 'Zur Programmatik der Nationalsozialistischen Linken: Das Strasser-Program von 1925-6', Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 14, 1966, pp.324-333.

73) Goebbels to Strasser, Elberfeld, 16 December 1925; Goebbels to Gauleiter of the AG, Elberfeld, 5 January 1926: BAK NS I/340. A copy of Goebbels' draft has not been found.

receive general approval from the AG members; it was indeed severely criticised and attacked by several individuals. 74)

A most negative evaluation was given by von Pfeffer. The latter's relationship with the AG was somewhat ambiguous throughout its existence. Although a participant in the organisation, he was not committed to the ideals of the leading activists, especially the 'socialist' ideas held by Strasser, Goebbels and Kaufmann. Ultimately von Pfeffer always acted without regard to AG decisions if the situation in his Gau demanded it. He was not prepared to subordinate himself automatically to the AG and reserved his right to act independently. His relationship with the AG underlines a basic flaw in the organisation: its lack of unity. The democratic organisational form, and the lack of leadership by Strasser, as well as the equality among the Gauleiter gave each the option to ignore or renege on points of agreed policy. The AG failed to live up to the demands agreed to by the membership in section 2 of the statutes, which called not only for 'the closest possible union of all participating Gaue in organisational and propaganda matters', but also 'if the occasion should demand it, the formulation of a common approach to political questions of the day'. The difficulty of realising this objective can be seen even within the "inner core" of the AG, the Rhenish-Westphalian region. Though structurally very similar there were distinct differences between the Elberfeld group and Ley and von Pfeffer in the adjoining Gau. Von Pfeffer's independent outlook conditioned his relationship with the AG from the beginning. At the Hagen meeting in September 1925 von Pfeffer, unlike the bulk of the Gauleiter present, refused to be drawn on the Esser issue raised by the Göttingen group, declaring that 'what happened in Munich was of no concern to him'. 75) On the second issue which gave rise to debate, the question of participation in elections, he agreed on the line of abstention, pushed through

74) Kaufmann, Elbrechter, Rosikat, Schlange, Viereck, Himmler, von Pfeffer, Haase, Fobke, and two unknown party members all gave their views; Horn, op. cit., p.236.

75) Jochmann, op. cit., p.209.

narrowly at the meeting, but obviously felt free to have second thoughts on the matter. Within a week of the meeting his attitude changed fundamentally. Using the argument that the whole issue of electoral participation was of little significance anyway, he proposed that everyone should act as his interests dictated. 76) To von Pfeffer it was purely a matter of tactics, not a fundamental dogma as it was with the Göttingen group. 77) In a second letter to the AG and to Munich, also dated 15 September, von Pfeffer announced his decision that Westphalia would after all participate in forthcoming local elections, though 'only to a limited extent'. 78) This change of attitude followed a Gau conference on 14 September at which von Pfeffer must have been put under severe pressure from local Nazi leaders to ignore the AG decision. One can see this in the arguments used by him to justify his change of mind. First of all there was the fact that there were 'several areas in which we will most definitely have success with our candidates, as well as one, if not two candidates, who will secure a seat in the provincial assembly'. Then von Pfeffer argued that 'in several places the NSDAP already plays such a role in public life that we cannot afford to omit our name from the ballot papers. Moreover, able representatives in these small local "parliaments" can direct welcome attention to themselves and our cause; we have in our province town councillors in several places whose activities produce a greater effect than many a mass meeting.' 79) Such unilateral acts weakened the position of those Gauleiter committed to non-participation. Rebukes from fellow AG members could do little except highlight the differences existing within the organisation. 80)

76) Von Pfefferto Hitler, Munich PL, and AG, Münster, 15 September 1925: BAK NS I/340.

77) Haase's views are given by Noakes, op. cit., p.67.

78) To the Munich PL the issue of electoral participation was not as controversial a matter as to some of the AG members. The PL was indeed giving contradictory instructions to the northern Gaue depending on whether or not the recipient favoured electoral participation. This situation was especially condemned at the Hagen meeting - see Goebbels to Hitler, Elberfeld, 12 September 1925: BAK NS I/340.

79) Von Pfeffer to Hitler, Munich, and AG Münster, 15 September 1925: BAK NS I/340.

80) See Dincklake to von Pfeffer, Hanover, 13 October 1925: BAK NS I/340.

Von Pfeffer's ideological attitudes also ran counter to the Strasser-Goebbels-Kaufmann concept of "socialism". Their emphasis on winning over the working class conflicted with von Pfeffer's idea of organising the maximum support for the völkisch cause from all social groupings. ⁸¹⁾ The chasm separating von Pfeffer from Strasser's petit bourgeois socialism is reflected in the racist-elitist philosophy of the Westphalian leader in his rejection of the ideas contained in the Strasser programme draft. ⁸²⁾ Along with Haase, von Pfeffer rejected Strasser's draft as being too democratic. ⁸³⁾ Von Pfeffer's basic ideas were 'diametrically opposed' to Strasser's, and involved a fundamentally different attitude towards the question of the equality of the individual. ⁸⁴⁾ The idea of the 'equality of individuals' and the belief in 'equal shares for all', which von Pfeffer saw as Strasser's basic premise, were anathema to him. This type of "socialism" was 'damaging and poisonous', based as it was, according to von Pfeffer, on 'Jewish-liberal-democratic-marxist-humanitarian concepts'. ⁸⁵⁾ Von Pfeffer did not believe in the idea that all men are equal in their physical and mental capacity. Indeed, the 'iron law of inequality' was the basis of his philosophy. ⁸⁶⁾ Given this difference, von Pfeffer's ideal was a state structure the function of which was not to ensure equal opportunity for all, but to ensure that the 'higher elements' of the race had the opportunity of elevating themselves above the 'lower elements'. ⁸⁷⁾ The Social-Darwinist belief in the survival of the fittest, 'natural selection', and 'constant conflict' strongly influenced his ideas. ⁸⁸⁾ The 'breeding' of the new élite (which would embrace some two-thirds of the

81) In the NS-Briefe von Pfeffer had to remind Goebbels that the party needed support from everyone, workers and middle class - Noakes, op. cit., p.73.

82) Von Pfeffer's Denkschrift (under the pseudonym 'Fredericus') "Zucht. Eine Forderung zum Programm" was drawn up towards the end of December 1925; copy in HA 44/896. (In future Denkschrift "Zucht").

83) On Haase's views see Noakes, op. cit., pp.74-75.

84) Denkschrift "Zucht", pp.2-3.

85) Ibid., p.3.

86) Denkschrift "Zucht", p.4.

87) Ibid., pp.5 ff..

88) Ibid., especially pp.10 and 12.

population!) was designed to eradicate the 'lowest grade' in the 'inferior category' of the population, the fate of which 'was decline and death ... Barren trees must be hacked out and thrown into the fire.' 89)

Von Pfeffer's new "breeding establishment", his ideal state, was to show 'no compassion' to those who did not fit in with his eugenic exercise. Though von Pfeffer himself admitted that the 'programme demands' outlined by him were 'phantastic', he defended his ideas as 'fitting reality in an honest way'. 90) The rest of the Denkschrift was concerned with demonstrating how the élite could take over the running of the state. 91) From this hotch-potch of ideas emerged von Pfeffer's pet-theme, the creation of a 'voluntary people's army', service in which was to be a pre-requisite for the elevation of the individual into the 'highest élite'. 92) Service in the army was the key idea behind von Pfeffer's new state system.

Although the Denkschrift did not touch on many ideas which exercised Strasser's imagination, the differences between von Pfeffer's and Strasser's drafts were fundamental. At the Hanover meeting of the AG on 25 January 1926, von Pfeffer, along with several other Gauleiter, proved a strong critic of the Strasser programme draft, which was not accepted by the assembled Gauleiter. The meeting agreed in principle, however, that the existing 25 Points needed expansion and clarification. 93) This feeling was embodied in the resolution passed by the conference: 'In the recognition that the general policy directives contained in the 25 Points require the addition of a more detailed programme

89) Von Pfeffer's catalogue of the 'lowest grade' in the 'inferior' category of the population (which was to be eliminated) was very extensive and included cripples, epileptics, the blind, the insane, the deaf and dumb, alcoholics, 'illegitimate orphans', murderers, prostitutes, sexual offenders, as well as the stupid (!), the weak, those suffering from hereditary illnesses etc.; Ibid., p.11.

90) Ibid., p.12.

91) Von Pfeffer deals only with the organisation of agriculture (pp.14-18) and industry (pp.19-22), and the mechanics by which the state could ensure the emergence and continuous renewal of the 'elite'.

92) Entry into the army was severely restricted and excluded not only the offspring of the 'lowest grade' in the 'inferior category', but also the offspring of 'November criminals', deserters, Jews, Blacks, Yellows, and traitors; *ibid.*, pp.23 ff..

93) Otto Strasser to Goebbels, Berlin, 26 January 1926: BAK NS I/340.

of action, especially in view of the importance and impact of propaganda activity in the growing political crisis, the meeting of the AG in Hanover ... is handing over the drafts produced by various party comrades to a study group under the direction of party comrade Gregor Strasser for clarification and consideration, with instructions to send the material, after it has been analysed, on to party headquarters for further evaluation'. 94) On three other important issues decisions were also arrived at. 95) The first related to a new press organ for the AG, 'Der National-Sozialist', on the creation of which Goebbels had been working since December 1925. 96) Secondly, a resolution on the expropriation of the royal houses was unanimously agreed upon. The decision against the idea of compensation, aligned the AG with the policy of the left-wing parties. 97) Though the resolution stated specifically that the AG did not wish to pre-empt the decision of party headquarters, it did so in fact. The decision, on an important and emotional issue of the time, can be seen as a direct challenge to Hitler's authority and leadership. It reflected the determination of the AG members to have a say in the formulation of party policy. Thirdly, a resolution dealing with the question of the attitude to be taken towards the patriotic associations re-affirmed the decision taken at the Hanover meeting of November 1925; namely, co-operation with them was rejected. 98)

The January meeting of the AG marked a watershed in the development of the organisation. Until December 1925 Hitler and the Munich party centre had

94) Jochmann, op. cit., p.223.

95) Summary of the meeting contained in a letter by Otto Strasser to Goebbels, Berlin, 26 January 1926: BAK NS I/340. Accounts also in O. Strasser, Hitler and I, London, 1940, pp.90 ff.; also Goebbels, Diary, pp.62-63. A comprehensive account which takes into consideration new material (a verbal account by von Pfeffer) is given in Noakes, op. cit., pp.76-78.

96) Goebbels to G. Strasser, Elberfeld, 29 December 1925: BAK NS I/340.

97) The resolution of the AG (against the idea of compensation) is reprinted in Kühnl, op. cit., p.299.

98) Not all the AG members had kept to the original decision, hence its re-appearance on the agenda. This emerges from Goebbels' letter to Strasser in which he stated "The Harburg branch and the Gau Lüneburg-Stade abuse me (especially Telschow-Buchholz) because I have refused to speak at a meeting protected by the Stahlhelm. You can see how much even our own AG members still have to learn"; Goebbels to G. Strasser, Elberfeld, 11 December 1925: BAK NS I/340.

not intervened in the AG's development. The "neutral" Munich attitude changed in the light of the expansion of the AG's activities to include the discussion and revision of the party programme. So many copies of the Strasser draft having been distributed by the Elberfeld centre, it was inevitable that it reached Hitler. Feder, who considered himself the father of the original programme, became aware of the draft's existence through the Nazi branch leader of Quedlinburg during the Christmas period, and attempted unsuccessfully to secure a copy from Strasser. 99) The distribution of the draft (its very existence in fact) without his or Hitler's knowledge enraged Feder, and Strasser, in view of this reaction, thought it advisable to take a series of measures to calm Munich feelings. 100) The idea of passing off the draft with a note stating that he had merely wanted to collect the views of different party members in order to create a definitive version of the programme at a later stage can hardly have quietened Hitler's fears. The appearance of Feder, uninvited and unannounced, at the January meeting of the AG as 'Hitler's representative' made it clear that Munich's suspicions about the AG had reached a new height. His presence meant that the exchange of views on details of programme lost the character of internal discussions among the AG, and the latent conflict with Hitler and the Munich party headquarters now changed into an open dispute. 101) The continuation of discussions of the party programme at the Hanover meeting, and the resolution passed by the Gauleiter to look at the problem further, demonstrates that the members of the AG were not prepared at that stage to drop an issue which was bound to create conflict with Hitler. The fact that Feder, Hitler's eyes and ears at the meeting, also noted 'careless remarks made in the heat of the struggle', some of which apparently touched on the leader's personality and ability, made a reaction by Hitler inevitable. 102)

99) Feder to FL of the NSDAP, Murnau, 2 May 1926, in Tyrell, op. cit., p.125.

100) Strasser to Goebbels, Landshut, 8 January 1926: BAK NS I/340.

101) Horn, op. cit., p.237.

102) Otto Strasser to Goebbels, Berlin, 26 January 1926: BAK NS I/340; Noakes, op. cit., pp.77-78. Horn accepts von Pfeffer's later statements (given some forty years after the event) at face value; Horn op. cit., pp.237-238.

Anything less would have been a negation of leadership on Hitler's part: the discussion of the "sacred" 25 Points and party policies in general after all smacked of separatism, disobedience and opposition.

Hitler's counter-offensive was organised rapidly. Invitations to a meeting of the two sides, scheduled to take place at Bamberg on 14 February 1926, were sent out to various individuals by the Munich party centre on 4 February. The leading figures within the AG were in no doubt as to the seriousness of their position and the gravity with which Hitler viewed the situation. Strasser was the first to take up a defensive position. Following a discussion with Hitler a week before the Bamberg meeting he felt it prudent to withdraw his programme draft. ¹⁰³⁾ Goebbels engaged in a piece of wishful thinking and failed to grasp the relative position of the AG vis-à-vis Hitler. 'In Bamberg', he confided to his diary, 'we shall have to act the part of the prudish beauty and lure Hitler onto our territory ... Not a soul has faith in Munich. Elberfeld must become the Mecca of German Socialism.' ¹⁰⁴⁾ Kaufmann was more realistic and prepared to fight it out, but viewed the forthcoming meeting with misgivings, fearing the worst. ¹⁰⁵⁾ Kaufmann's anxiety was shared by von Pfeffer, who declined to attend the meeting because he feared a debacle. ¹⁰⁶⁾ His fears turned out to be justified. At Bamberg the AG supporters were in a minority, and important leaders were absent from the meeting. ¹⁰⁷⁾ For the AG leadership the meeting was a disaster; Hitler ploughed them under verbally. In a speech lasting some five hours Hitler covered the major points of difference and hammered home his viewpoint. ¹⁰⁸⁾ By the time he had finished there was little room for compromise or discussion. The choice was one between acceptance or rejection.

103) Horn, op. cit., p.240; Noakes, op. cit., p.79.

104) Goebbels, Diary, entry 11 February 1926, pp.65-66.

105) See Kaufmann's letter to G. Strasser, Elberfeld, 8 February 1926: BAK NS I/338 Bd. I.

106) Noakes, op. cit., p.80.

107) Some 60 to 65 party leaders were present. Of the AG leaders, Kaufmann, von Pfeffer, Fobke and Haase were absent. Otto Strasser was also not present (since he did not occupy any party position he was not invited anyway) - Horn, op. cit., p.240; further Kühnl, op. cit., p.44.

108) Orlow, op. cit., p.60; Kühnl, op. cit., pp.44 ff..

In the weeks following Bamberg the AG members were reluctant to view their setback as a final defeat, and Goebbels especially continued to nurture the hope that Hitler could be won over and removed from the influence of the 'rogues' who surrounded him in Munich. ¹⁰⁹⁾ As an effective organisation the AG collapsed quite quickly. After two meetings, held at Göttingen and Hanover in the wake of the Bamberg fiasco, towards the end of February, the AG did not show signs of activity. The leading figures in the AG also became uncertain in the face of Hitler's tactics. In his relations with the leaders of the AG the tone Hitler adopted was one of conciliation and consideration, especially towards Strasser and Goebbels. ¹¹⁰⁾ At the beginning of March Strasser observed his promise to Hitler and called in all the existing copies of his draft. ¹¹¹⁾ Goebbels also recognised where power within the party really lay and gradually began to accommodate himself to the Munich line. ¹¹²⁾

In the period of the AG's collapse von Pfeffer simply kept his head down. The decline and collapse of the AG in all probability meant very little to him. For the most part he had been an observer and a fellow-traveller. He wrote the occasional article in the 'NS-Briefe' and involved himself in the discussions and conference decisions. But his commitment to the AG was not as intense as that of Strasser or Goebbels. Nor did he particularly wish to follow the line taken by the latter. Ideologically von Pfeffer (like several other Gauleiter active in the AG) did not fit in with the "socialist" emphasis which the Elberfeld group and Strasser were committed to. ¹¹³⁾ What may have attracted von Pfeffer to the AG was the rationalisation of organisation it brought about in the Rhenish-Westphalian region. This is reflected to some degree in the enthusiasm with which von Pfeffer organised Gau Ruhr, following the amalgamation of Gaue Rhineland-North and Westphalia in March 1926.

109) Goebbels, Diary, entries 15 February onwards, pp.67-69.

110) Horn, op. cit., p.242.

111) Jochmann, op. cit., p.225.

112) Noakes, op. cit., pp.81 ff..

113) According to Kaufmann, von Pfeffer was never in agreement with his and Goebbels' idea of socialism, which "went too far" for von Pfeffer. Kaufmann to Heinemann, Elberfeld, 24 June 1927; reprinted in Tyrell, op. cit., p.129.

Chapter 7. THE WESTPHALIAN NSDAP AND GAU RUHR: 1926 TO 1928.

The General Trends in the Westphalian NSDAP.

After the formation of Gau Ruhr, created at the Essen party conference of 7 March 1926 by the fusion of the Gaue Rhineland-North and Westphalia, Gau Westphalia lost its distinct identity. From 1926 to 1928 the fortunes of the Westphalian National Socialists were closely tied to those of the Gau Ruhr. Gau Westphalia was to re-emerge as a separate organisation in the summer of 1928, following the removal of Kaufmann as Gauleiter of the Ruhr region and the re-creation of Gau Westphalia under the leadership of the new Gauleiter Josef Wagner.

Gau Ruhr at the time of its creation was a formidable power within the national Nazi movement. In terms of growth and the overall strength of the party in the districts which formed the new Gau, the record for the period May 1925 to May 1926 was impressive, with a membership increase of just under 270 per cent. In May 1925 the area which was to comprise Gau Ruhr had a total membership of 1,420. ¹⁾ By the end of May 1926 Gau Ruhr contained 3,740 paid-up members, of which 1,447 came from the former Gau Westphalia. ²⁾ Gau Ruhr thus comprised some 8 per cent of the total National Socialist membership in the Republic, and was recognised on all sides as a centre of major growth within the movement. ³⁾ With one exception, the largest party branches were situated in the most populous industrial towns of the Ruhr: Essen (508), Hattingen (376), Düsseldorf (273), Bochum (213), Elberfeld (211), and Duisburg (172). ⁴⁾ The membership of the old Gau Westphalia was organised in 61 branches, of which the province of Westphalia contained 52, while 5 lay in the

1) Hüttenberger, op. cit., p.34.

2) "Gau Ruhr der NSDAP. Mitgliederstand vom 31 Mai 1926": BAK NS I/342.

3) Total membership of the NSDAP - 1925 27,117; 1926 49,523; Schäfer, op.cit., p.11.

4) The Ruhr branches could not compete with such important and sizeable branches of the movement, such as Nürnberg, which had a membership of between 1,700 and 1,800 by the end of 1925; Pridham, op. cit., p.52.

Regierungsbezirk of Osnabrück, 3 in the small state of Lippe-Detmold, and one branch, that of Nette, lay in the Regierungsbezirk of Hildesheim. Thirty-four branches in the province of Westphalia lay within the Regierungsbezirk of Arnsberg, and thirteen in the Regierungsbezirk of Münster. Exactly half of the 52 branches of the province lay within the Ruhr industrial belt. Only a handful of branches could boast a large membership; there were only 5 branches with 50 members or more, two of which, Hattingen (376) and Bochum (213), accounted for around 40 per cent of the total Westphalian membership in May 1926. The bulk of the branches were very small, 25 having a membership of 10 or less.

For much of 1926 the Rhenish-Westphalian area continued to be a growth region for the NSDAP. New impetus came from the amalgamation of Gau Westphalia and Gau Rhineland-North, and the establishment of the triumvirate of Goebbels, Kaufmann and von Pfeffer, which fused the organisational and propaganda activity of the two Gaue and gave the centre of the most rapid growth, the Ruhr complex, a unified administration. The activities generated by the new command structure produced immediate dividends. The mid-1926 period saw a rapid expansion in the number of party branches and an influx of new members, a trend reflected in the heavy demand made on Munich party headquarters for enrolment forms. 5) By July 1926 the Ruhr Gauleitung was able to assert, with little fear of contradiction, that Gau Ruhr was the 'strongest Gau' of the movement. 6)

The strength of the movement was reflected not only in the increasing membership, but also in the interest which the party was able to arouse in the public at large. Small, newly founded branches were able to organise meetings with attendances quite out of proportion to their size. Thus the Ahlen branch, founded in March 1926 with a membership of between 15 and 20, was able to attract some 400 people to its first public meeting. 7) At Recklinghausen the local party branch was able to entice 60 people to one of its meetings

5) GL Ruhr to PL, Elberfeld, 2 June and 15 June 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

6) GL Ruhr to PL, Elberfeld, 1 July 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

7) Reports by the Landrat, Beckum, 19 March and 17 May 1926: SAM VII - 64 Band I.

despite the exorbitant entrance payment of 50 Pf. per person. 8) In 1925 and the first half of 1926 the police reports covering the numerous meetings organised by the party commented on the good turn-out achieved. They gave attendance figures for the majority of the meetings as being between 100 and 300. Such significant numerical "interest" was of great importance to the National Socialists in view of the financial gains which resulted from well-attended meetings. In those centres, such as Bochum, where the party was beginning to be a force of significance, attendances were very much higher. This was partly due to the attention given to the movement by political forces determined to prevent or disrupt meetings. At a meeting organised in Bochum by Wagner, at which Feder was the chief attraction, some 700 of the 1,200 present were estimated to be from the ranks of the KPD. 9) In general, meetings throughout the Ruhr attracted large numbers of left-wing opponents, who viewed the new brand of "socialism" preached by the Nazis with misgivings.

The expansion of the NSDAP in 1926 was increasingly overshadowed by financial weakness, which hampered the effectiveness of the party effort. The amalgamation of the two Gaue theoretically provided the new Gauleitung with greater financial resources. In practice the financial gains which accrued through the rationalisation of the party administration were largely nullified by Munich's insistence on the fulfilment by the Gau of its contributions to the national funds. In this matter the Gau Rhineland-North had not been very cooperative in 1925, though Gau Westphalia was at least making an attempt by the end of 1925 to meet Munich's demands. But both Gaue at the time of their union had piled up arrears, the payment of which Munich party headquarters continued to insist upon. For the Ruhr Gauleitung there was no way of avoiding the 'burden', since it was caught by Munich's control of membership cards. It was this administrative feature (accepted by the Gau leaders) which forced the Gauleitung to meet its obligations. The pressure placed on the Gauleitung was

8) Police report, Recklinghausen, 1 October 1925: SAM VII - 2 Band 4.

9) Police report, Bochum, 10 March 1926: SAM I PA/279.

increased as the party membership in the area expanded, for the expansion was jeopardized if the membership cards were not processed rapidly enough by the Parteileitung, while a delay of several months also meant a loss of income to the Gau. The Gauleitung was thus caught in a vicious circle which led the Gau administration to make a great effort to fulfil its duty to Munich. The Ruhr Gauleitung found its offer of 'we will pay later' insufficient to get party headquarters to process a backlog of membership cards. At the end of March 1926 a hundred Marks were sent to Munich to mollify the Parteileitung. In the accompanying letter the cash sent was referred to 'as proof of our good intention to pay'. The Gauleitung went on to assure Munich 'that we will also pay the still outstanding arrears as quickly as possible. You must take into consideration that our Gau has got into financial difficulties due to the recently held large meetings, which after all have given a considerable boost to our movement ... We will meet our obligations as soon as cash is in hand without further reminders.' 10) The Parteileitung had little sympathy with the financial problems facing Gau Ruhr, and continued to hold back membership cards until the Gau paid the arrears. 11)

The financial difficulties of the movement placed severe limitations on its activities, and forced the Gauleitung to rely heavily on the sacrifices the rank and file were prepared to make for the cause. There were no alternatives but to tap this resource, for the Ruhr Gauleitung had few possibilities of obtaining funds from wealthy backers as long as the party played only a limited role at regional and national levels. The Gauleitung could do little to assist the weaker party branches. As far as possible each branch was urged to meet its own financial requirements and to restrict its activities within the limitations set by its financial situation. Fortunately for the NSDAP, the party members were generally prepared to do their utmost to help the

10) Gau Ruhr to PL, Elberfeld, 29 March 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

11) Bouhler to Gau Ruhr, Munich, 1 April 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

movement. It was this willingness of the ordinary members which allowed the movement to continue its efforts in spite of limited progress in the 1926 to 1928 period. ¹²⁾ One way in which extra cash (beyond that derived from membership dues) was obtained was through the establishment of a 'Gau Opferring', the so-called 'Freiheits-Bund', in which the richer members were gathered, and to which the party sympathisers, who could not or would not openly join the party, could contribute. ¹³⁾ Some branch leaders tried extreme measures to obtain the necessary cash for propaganda. In Hohenlimburg an order of the branch leader in 1926 contained the following instruction: 'Every paid-up member of the branch hereby pledges himself to give up the enjoyment of alcohol and nicotine for three months. The savings made in this way will be paid to the branch treasury and used for the purpose of financing the propaganda necessary to spread National Socialist thought.' In this way a hundred Marks were collected which went to finance the propaganda activities of the branch. ¹⁴⁾ The leader and treasurer of the Bielefeld branch, Homann, worked on similar, though less drastic lines. In his capacity as leader of the SA, he issued the following order: 'For the SA there will be a ban on alcoholic consumption in the next week, and on nicotine in the week after. The money thus saved is to be handed in at the beginning of the week to the party treasurer. Every transgression against the prohibitions will be punished by a 50 Pf. fine.' ¹⁵⁾

As far as it was possible each branch attempted to finance the costs of propaganda through the income derived from public meetings, and from voluntary contributions gathered during the various events organised by the party. This way of financing party activity presupposed, of course, that the meetings would attract sufficient numbers to cover the costs. But often the party branches

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- 12) "Nur dadurch, dass die Partei an den Opfermut ihre Mitglieder besonders hohe Ansprüche stellt, vermag sie ihre beträchtlichen Kosten verschlingende Propaganda noch durchzuhalten". Report by the Reichskommissariat für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, Berlin, 15 July, 1927; copy in SAM Nr. 1707.
- 13) Beck, op. cit., p.220. A similar organisation was also active in Gau Hanover - Noakes, op. cit., p.94.
- 14) Beck, op. cit., p.394.
- 15) Hiemisch, op. cit., p.11.

were unable to achieve a sufficiently high turn-out, especially in the post-1926 period. The NSDAP shared the fate of the KPD during the period of economic revival, when the climate was less conducive to radicalism. The interest of the public in the NSDAP declined, a development reflected in the low turn-out at meetings, and the lack of growth of the Nazi party membership. 16) In 1925 the poor economic situation and the distress and dissatisfaction caused by high unemployment had provided the KPD and NSDAP with a much more receptive audience. 17) In the course of 1926 party branches needed the "big names" to attract sufficient numbers to their meetings, and even these were no guarantee for success. Often what were planned as mammoth meetings turned out to be fiascos, the only result of which was to leave branches with considerable debts on their hands which effectively curtailed subsequent activities. The difficulties failures presented to party treasurers are to be seen in an incident which befell the Bielefeld branch following a meeting at which Goebbels had been the main attraction. Writing to Goebbels, the party treasurer stated that he was 'asked by our party comrades to express once more our regret about the unhappy end to our last public meeting. Against such unexpected financial misadventures one is powerless. We had certainly thought that this meeting would have brought a useful surplus, as has always happened in the past. From now on we will only hold meetings when the costs for them are already available. But since this situation will undoubtedly never be the case, the last meeting will have been our final one in Bielefeld. To cover your costs I enclose 10 Marks for the time being. On 5 March 1926 we ordered ABC's to the value of 17 Marks; these we have not yet received. In view of our financial situation can we use

- 16) The relationship between economic distress and radicalism, and the similarity of the position of the two radical parties noted in the police report, Recklinghausen, 15 April 1926: SAM Nr. 2076; the lack of the right 'conditions' for Nazi growth noted in the reports of the Recklinghausen police, 31 December 1926: SAM Nr. 2076; and 7 October 1927: SAM VII - 2 Band 5.
- 17) Police report, Recklinghausen, 5 December 1925: SAM VII - 2 Band 4. The unemployed often provided a large percentage of the audience of Nazi meetings. In Herne, for example, 2/3 rds. of a 300 strong audience at a Nazi meeting in February 1926 were estimated to be unemployed: Police report, Bochum, 10 March 1926: SAM I PA/279.

that money to pay your fee? The remaining 6 Marks I will send to you tomorrow.' 18) Larger branches such as Bielefeld were in a position to recover from such setbacks, and the treasurers' pessimism proved exaggerated. For smaller branches dependent on the little income derived from a handful of members, a number of poorly attended meetings could be fatal. The experience of the Soest branch in 1926 illustrates the point. The first public meeting of 1926, at which Feder was the chief speaker, produced an income of 17 Marks to meet an outlay of 150 Marks. The deficit was met by three branch members, and, surprisingly at that stage, the failure of the meeting did not deter further efforts. A second meeting in June, at which Josef Wagner spoke, had an audience of around 70, of which 80 per cent were Communists. The third meeting, at which Kaufmann was to speak, drew only two persons, and was cancelled. The poor turn-out was due to a boycott by the Communists. It had dawned on the KPD leaders that it was their members who contributed to the Nazi funds, hence the instructions to the party members to keep away. As a consequence of the disastrously low attendance, the net receipt of the meeting was 30 Pf., and that "sum" was only secured 'because one of the two members which attended the meeting magnanimously refused to ask for the return of his entrance payment'. The branch faced a deficit of 70 Marks. The series of setbacks proved too much for the Soest branch. 'The large deficits resulting from the meetings, added to the costs of the general propaganda, had to be borne by the two party members Hemmer and Zurwehne since there were no rich members in the branch. Both the bearers of the financial burden were only low grade civil servants dependent on a small income.' In this situation it was impossible to continue staging public meetings, and none were held until 1928. 19)

The financial situation at the Gau and local levels was only one, though perhaps the major, handicap which slowed down the momentum the party had acquired

18) Kassenwart Semmler (Rechtsanwalt) to Göbbels (sic), OG Bielefeld, 12 March 1926: BAK NS I/338.

19) Beck, op. cit., pp.359-360.

by the summer of 1926. In part the slower progress can be explained by the determination of the NSDAP to acquire a distinct identity, a policy which involved the cutting of ties with völkisch and right-wing extremist movements and associations, and a drift into isolation. As we have seen, the Westphalian Nazi movement had cultivated the various right-wing associations and received valuable support and encouragement from the JdO, Stahlhelm and so on, and many of the NSDAP/NSFB branches had been strengthened by winning support from such quarters. 20) Hitler himself had always reserved his position on the wisdom of merging the movement with similar völkisch groups. 21) For much of 1925 the relationship between the NSDAP and diverse völkisch and patriotic movements was obscure, until a directive issued by the Parteileitung in September clarified the situation following an incident at a JdO meeting held in Lippe-Detmold. During a parade by various associations participating in the event, a former prince who was taking the salute turned his back on the SA as it marched past. This action was considered an insult 'to the honour and reputation of the movement, its flag and the fourteen deaths of 9 November 1923'. The Parteileitung formulated a number of directives to prevent a repetition of such an act:

'i. ... Party branches and the SA can no longer participate in so-called "patriotic-national" events. The prohibition against participation applies to all meetings of those associations which do not see in Adolf Hitler or General Ludendorff their highest leader. At meetings of the FKB, D.V.O., Fronnbann, Schilljugend, Dt. Frauenorden and Tarmenbergbund branches may participate, if invited. At meetings of the JdO the local situation is to be taken into consideration before participation.

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- 20) Sometimes the support given to the Nazis by right-wing organisations proved their own undoing. In Hamm the NSDAP at its formation in May 1924 made such inroads on the Stahlhelm membership, that the local Stahlhelm branch folded up; police report, Hamm, 10 November 1925: SAM I PA/372.
- 21) Bullock notes that "In Part I of *Mein Kampf* (written in the years 1924-5) Hitler expressed his dislike of such alliances. It is quite erroneous to believe that the strength of the movement must increase if it be combined with other movements of a similar kind. ... In reality the movement thus admits outside elements which will subsequently weaken its vigour". Bullock, op. cit., p.124.

- ii. An official participation of branches at monarchic events is forbidden.
- iii. Participation of branches and the SA in march-pasts before officers of the Old Army, who as individuals or as members of their organisation reject General Ludendorff, is forbidden.
- iv. Branches or the SA, which do not observe these directives, can expect to be excluded from the party.' ²²⁾

The directives were the first step along the road towards the isolation which was to be such a handicap to the movement. ²³⁾ In 1926 there were persistent attacks on several right-wing movements which generated a "we alone feeling" in the ranks of the NSDAP. The JdO, especially Mahraun's "western orientation", came in for particularly severe criticism in the spring of 1926. ²⁴⁾ The relationship with the JdO and Stahlhelm, among others, became an important issue in the branches of the Westphalian NSDAP, which vociferously supported the trend towards separation. In the Arnsberg branch, for example, the whole question of the relationship with patriotic and right-wing movements was a major point of debate. ²⁵⁾ A motion of the branch considered at the Gau party conference held in Essen on 7 March 1926 called for the exclusion of all National Socialists who were still members of those 'patriotic organisations which do not stand behind our leader Adolf Hitler'. ²⁶⁾ At the same time the Nazis also moved away from the Ludendorff orientated movements. This was perhaps inevitable as the relationship between Hitler and Ludendorff had deteriorated in the course of 1925, though the former was careful not to precipitate a crisis and open conflict with a person of such standing within the völkisch circles as a whole, including the NSDAP. ²⁷⁾ In 1926 the distinction "military leader"

22) "Rundschreiben", Munich, 15 September 1925: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 373.

23) "Trotz nicht zu leugnender Organisationserfolge der NSDAP in Norddeutschland ... machte sich doch eine zunehmende Isolierung der NS Bewegung bemerkbar, die die Entwicklungsaussichten als wenig günstig erscheinen lassen"; in "Lage der NSDAP", report, Berlin, 21 December 1925: HA 69/1509.

24) Völkischer Beobachter, 4 February 1926 - "Offener Brief an Mahraun".

25) "Tätigkeitsbericht für Februar 1926", OG Arnsberg: BAK NS I/338 Band I.

26) "Antrag der OG Arnsberg zum Gautag", 22 February 1926: BAK NS I/338 Band I.

27) For the relationship between Ludendorff and Hitler see Horn, op. cit., pp. 227 ff..

(Ludendorff) and "political leader" (Hitler) became untenable as a result of the formation and development of the SA and the political role assigned to it by Hitler within the NSDAP. Indications of a widening gulf between Hitler and Ludendorff are mirrored in the Westphalian developments. A report for February 1926 noted that 'the NSDAP is engaged at present in cutting its ties with the Tannenbergbund. The party is attempting to separate the pro-Nazi (Hitlerite) members from the Tannenbergbund (and its subordinate organisations). This development is accompanied by a certain movement away from Ludendorff, who is closely associated with the Tannenbergbund.' 28)

The division between the National Socialists and the numerous para-military and patriotic movements, whose apolitical and supra-party status was reflected in a general distrust of political movements and politicians, including Hitler and the NSDAP, became more permanent following Hitler's last attempt in the mid-twenties to persuade their various leaders to subordinate themselves to his leadership at a meeting in Weimar in October 1926. 29) Its result was a further strengthening of the isolationism within the party. In the long term Hitler's tactic gave the NSDAP a distinct identity, and furthered the development of a movement which 'though insignificant numerically, represented a rigidly organised, very disciplined radical-revolutionary minority group directed by one single will'. 30)

In Westphalia the limitations imposed on the party by lack of cash, insufficient interest in the movement by the population, and the isolationist tendency, led to a loss of impetus in the post-1926 period. 31) Statistically it is very difficult to measure this in the membership movements of the party due to the lack of data for the whole of the Westphalian part of Gau Ruhr.

28) "Lage in der Rechtsbewegung", report by the Oberpräsident of Westphalia, Münster, 24 February 1926: SAM VII - 64 Band I.

29) On the meeting and its result see Orlow, op. cit., pp.98 ff..

30) From a report by the Reichskommissariat für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, 15 July 1927: SAM Nr. 1707.

31) These handicaps were shared by the movement elsewhere; see Pridham, op. cit., p.63. It is difficult to share his view that the lack of the right "environment" (i.e. economic stagnation) was not a contributing factor.

In one respect, the party exuded confidence. The Nazis were able to extend their network of branches in the province, their number increasing to 72 by the spring of 1927.³²⁾ A third of these lay in the 'old' growth centre of Bochum district, controlled by Josef Wagner. The bulk of the branches continued to be situated within the Ruhr industrial area, and the party retained the urban nature it had acquired in 1925-6. Progress in the agrarian and predominantly Catholic counties was negligible. The Arnsberg district, despite the able leadership of Teipel, made no progress in the post-1926 period and continued to have a mere four branches. The Münsterland district, geographically the largest, contained only seven branches, two of which lay outside the Regierungsbezirk of Münster. The evidence available on party membership produces a picture of stagnation in comparison with the growth years of 1925-1926. The increase in the membership of branches for which there are records was limited, and more often than not increases were not sustained.³³⁾ The figures for the branches included in the police district of Recklinghausen (records covering the branches of Gelsenkirchen, Bottrop, Osterfeld, Haltern, Dorsten and Münster) for the year 1927 show an overall decline of 30 per cent from January to December.³⁴⁾ The figures for the Münster branch show that by December 1927 the branch had slightly fewer members than it had had in 1925.³⁵⁾ Though these figures cannot be taken as representative for the NSDAP in the whole of Westphalia, they do show that in important growth areas of the past a marked decline had set in, which augured badly for the future of the party.

32) "Anschriften der OGL des Gaues Ruhr", Spring 1927: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

33) The two branches for which Beck gives comprehensive figures, Lünen and Wickede reflect mixed fortunes. The Lünen branch had 18 members in 1924, 15 in 1927 and only 4 by 1928. In Wickede the party grew from 8 members in 1924 to 12 by 1925, 27 by 1926 and 30 by 1927. "Aber dieser Stand konnte nicht lang gehalten werden. Die Werke kamen zum Standstill und viele der Getreuen mussten von hier abwandern". Beck, op. cit., pp.347-348, 389-390.

34) Jan. 735 April 810 July 680 Oct. 575
 Feb. 740 May 788 Aug. 624 Nov. 550
 March 741 June 716 Sept. 612 Dec. 525

Police report, Recklinghausen, 9 January 1928: SAM VII - 2 Band 5.

35) The Münster membership figures are 1925: 66; Dec. 1926: 87; Dec. 1927: 61; Orlow, op. cit., p.111.

The revival of the NSDAP fortunes in the province had to await the more favourable situation of the post-1928 period. Then the increasing economic gloom which descended on Germany radicalised the electorate, a development from which the NSDAP benefited enormously. The take-over of the Gau by Josef Wagner in the summer of 1928 also proved an important landmark in the history of Westphalian National Socialism. His drive and enthusiasm did much to enable the Nazis to exploit the much more favourable situation presented by economic and political developments.

The Gauleitung.

In the reorganised NSDAP the Gau organisational units controlled by the regional party headquarters, the Gauleitung, played key roles on the regional level in matters relating to administration, organisation and propaganda. For the Parteileitung the Gauleitung was of great significance in Munich's efforts to centralise the whole party apparatus. A new feature in the vertical organisational form of the post-1925 party structure, the scope and extent of the power of the Gauleitung and its relationship to the Munich Parteileitung on the one hand, and to the regional sub-divisions on the district and local levels on the other, were only gradually worked out in the light of experience.

Theory and practice did not always coincide in the first few years following the reconstruction of the party. Hitler's claim to control the appointment of the Gauleiter, for example, became a reality only as centralisation was gradually achieved by the Parteileitung and as the Führerprinzip permeated the whole of the party structure. The developments in Gau Westphalia, and Gau Ruhr, mirror the changes which took place in the re-organised party. The appointment of von Pfeffer as Gauleiter of Westphalia had been a formality rather than an exercise of authority by Hitler.³⁶⁾ But at the same time von Pfeffer's letter of appointment heralded the end of the quasi-independent position he had enjoyed in the loose-knit organisation of the old NSFB of 1924. For the first time his responsibilities as Gauleiter in relation to the

36) See above, Chapter 6, p. 202.

Parteileitung were made clear. These involved not only the organisation and running of the NSDAP in Gau Westphalia, but the enforcement of the re-enrolment procedure of the members by the Munich central party office, the strict and prompt collection of membership dues, and the transfer of the central party's share of the monthly dues to Munich. ³⁷⁾ In the months following, von Pfeffer's reluctance to accept the need of the re-enrolment procedure led to a war of attrition between himself and Bouhler, a contest in which the Parteileitung was ultimately successful. ³⁸⁾ Though conforming to the Munich directives on organisational matters, von Pfeffer did not automatically accept the superior authority assumed by the Parteileitung. His rudeness in his correspondence with Munich indicates that he still had much to learn about the Führerprinzip and its implications. While resisting Munich's attempts to control him, von Pfeffer took his own Führer position very seriously. This emerges in the correspondence between von Pfeffer and the Parteileitung concerning Böger's accusation that von Pfeffer had used party funds for his own private purposes. ³⁹⁾ Von Pfeffer felt especially affronted by the fact that Munich corresponded directly with Böger about the accusations without informing him. This state of affairs 'disgusted' and upset von Pfeffer, who thought that the Partei-leitung 'should have let him have the Böger letter at once', and should not have communicated with one of his 'subordinates' behind his back. Von Pfeffer virtually ordered Hess to write to Böger 'in the name of the Parteileitung, and not in the name of Hitler', and dictated a letter to Hess to be written by him to Böger calling on the latter to retract. ⁴⁰⁾ Hess duly complied with all von Pfeffer's peremptory demands. ⁴¹⁾ Von Pfeffer was able to clear his name in a court action in January 1926, in which Böger retracted his accusations. ⁴²⁾ The affair shows that von Pfeffer, while questioning the actions

37) PL to von Pfeffer, Munich, 3 April 1925: HA 8/165.

38) Correspondence concerning membership etc. in HA 8/165.

39) Böger to Hess, Münster, 14 August 1925: HA 4/86.

40) Von Pfeffer to Hess, Hitler, G. Strasser, Himmler, Münster, 22 August 1925: HA 4/86.

41) Hess to J. Böger, Munich, n.d.: HA 4/86. The text of the letter was virtually one dictated by von Pfeffer in his letter of 22 August 1925.

42) Von Pfeffer to PL, Münster, 20 January 1926: HA 4/86; von Pfeffer to Munich, Elberfeld, 28 May 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

of the Parteileitung and its interference in Gau matters, was not averse to using the authority of the Parteileitung to pressurise his opponents when it suited him.

In most matters von Pfeffer felt free to determine the affairs and direction taken by the Westphalian Gau with scant regard to the repercussions his independent actions might have on Munich. He became not only a permanent supporter of the AG, but also involved himself in another organisational development, Gau Ruhr, which emerged independent of the Munich party centre. Gau Ruhr was constructed in March 1926 at a time when the AG was already in the process of dissolution. The originators of the idea of creating a 'super-Gau' covering the whole of the Rhenish-Westphalian area (similar in area to the present Land Northrhine-Westphalia), were the chief figures behind the AG, namely Strasser and Goebbels. The latter was especially interested in the idea believing that such a structure, centred on Elberfeld, would become 'a power factor of some significance' within the national movement.⁴³⁾ The new Gau was to be the platform on which the AG was to rest, and the Gau office at Elberfeld was to double as the business centre of the AG. Strasser liked the idea of a super-Gau in the Ruhr region because he believed that the Ruhr would be subjected to a severe economic crisis during the winter period, which would result in a significant influx of members.⁴⁴⁾ It was thought that a larger, and thus more adequately financed organisation, would be in a better position to control the expected growth. The discussions between Strasser and Goebbels on the subject were widened in January 1926 when Kaufmann and von Pfeffer were won over to the idea. The Parteileitung was only informed about the planned creation at the eleventh hour by Strasser.⁴⁵⁾ Hitler was not consulted about the re-organisation, but was probably aware of the plan through Feder, who

43) Goebbels, Diary, entry for 16 December 1925.

44) Strasser to Goebbels, 3 October 1925: BAK NS I/341 Band 1.

45) Strasser to Bouhler, 5 March 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

had been invited to speak at the meeting (provisionally fixed to take place in Hagen on 28 February 1926) at which the two Gaue were to be ceremonially joined. ⁴⁶⁾ In the event the meeting was held in Essen on 7 March.

The new Gau Ruhr was led jointly by Goebbels, Kaufmann and von Pfeffer, the collegiate leadership system of Gau Rhineland-North being retained. ⁴⁷⁾ In order to streamline administration, cut out confusion and possible duplication of effort, the new tripartite leadership was broken down and areas of competence were defined. ⁴⁸⁾ Von Pfeffer was made responsible for organisation, finance and the SA. Much of the routine administrative work fell on him. It was he who restructured the vertical Gau administration by extending the triple division principle used in Gau Westphalia (Gau - district - branch) to Gau Ruhr. The introduction of the district division was pushed through by him in spite of Goebbels' reservations about its desirability and usefulness. ⁴⁹⁾ Kaufmann became responsible for 'the internal questions of the movement', such as branch leader disputes and questions relating to personnel in general. Goebbels took over propaganda, the organisation of meetings, distribution of speakers, matters relating to the press, pamphlets and literature in general. The division of responsibility freed Goebbels and Kaufmann, the most active and able speakers of the region, from the daily routine of which Goebbels especially had become sick and tired. ⁵⁰⁾

The relationship of the more powerful Gauleitung with Munich was distinctly cool at first. Munich did not hasten to confirm the position of the three

46) Goebbels to Frick, Feder, Dietrich, Elberfeld, 14 January 1926: BAK NS I/341.

47) One immediate improvement due to the increased financial support enjoyed by the GL of Gau Ruhr was the hiring of new office facilities in Elberfeld, which were remarkably good in comparison with facilities at the disposal of other Gauleiter; on this see Hüttenberger, op. cit., p.25; an interesting description of Gauleiter Klant's facilities is given by Krebs, op. cit., p.40. The five-roomed party centre of Elberfeld was noteworthy enough to warrant two entries in Goebbels' diary: entries for 31 March and 1 April 1926.

48) For the following see GL Rhineland-North to PL, Elberfeld, 29 March 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203. Also (copy) police report, Elberfeld, 29 May 1926: SAM VII - 64 Band 1.

49) Goebbels had criticised the 'district' unit previously - see Goebbels to von Pfeffer, Elberfeld, 21 January 1926: BAK NS I/389 Band I.

50) "I am sick of organising. I shall be glad when Captain von Pfeffer takes over all that junk". Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., entry for 20 January 1926.

Gauleiter, who had to wait until the beginning of April before Hitler officially recognised the triumvirate. 51) This is not altogether surprising. For one reason or another the Gauleiter involved in the Ruhr organisation had been getting on the nerves of Hitler and party headquarters in the spring of 1926. When the three went to Munich at the beginning of April (Goebbels was invited by Hitler to speak at a Munich party rally), Hitler showed his feelings. Both Kaufmann and Goebbels were reproached by Hitler for their behaviour in the Ruhr and their role in the AG, while Kaufmann 'got a dressing-down because of a rude letter to Bouhler'. 52) Another reason for the lack of harmony was the slowness with which the Gauleitung fulfilled its obligations to the party headquarters, primarily in the financial sphere. 53) Then there was the dispute between Gauleitung Ruhr and Feder, which developed more fully in May 1926, in which Hitler and the party headquarters, and finally the Party Court (Uchsla) became involved. 54) This bad-tempered dispute had wide implications. Its origin lay in Goebbels' invitation to Feder to speak at the Essen party rally of 7 March. In his letter, Goebbels offered Feder a mere half-hour for his speech, scheduled for the end of the meeting. Feder took offence with the tone of the letter and some of the remarks it contained. Appointed by Hitler after the Bamberg meeting to be the chief speaker on questions relating to the party programme, Feder felt the need for at least an hour and a half to discuss the programmatical basis of National Socialism. He considered the need to clarify the party programme an especially urgent one in the Gau in view of the 'notorious ... Strasser draft'. 55) Although he received no reply to his letter, Feder went to Essen on the instructions of Hitler, and was granted an hour for

51) Copies of letters of authorisation, dated Munich, 9 April 1926 in HA 54/1290.

52) Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., entry for 13 April 1926.

53) See the letters of complaint - PL to GL Ruhr, Munich, 4 May 1926; PL to GL Ruhr, Munich, 4 June 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

54) Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., entry for 31 May 1926.

55) Feder to Goebbels, Berlin, 26 February 1926; reprinted in Kühnl, op. cit., pp. 367-368.

his speech by von Pfeffer. 56) After the speech, Goebbels apologised for his letter of invitation and the limited speaking time he had offered to Feder. The whole affair might well have been forgotten then, had it not been for an indiscretion by Feder which reached the ear of von Pfeffer and his colleagues. In a discussion with Bauschen, a local party figure, Feder had referred to the need for vigilance in the Gau to prevent the re-appearance of a new 'treacherous concern', undoubtedly an oblique reference to the AG in which von Pfeffer, Goebbels and Kaufmann were all involved. Von Pfeffer, with his traditional concept of honour, took this as a personal insult to himself and his co-Gauleiter, and wrote two letters to the Parteileitung, whose 'impertinent and hateful tone ... surprised and hurt' Feder, who took the matter further. In the Uschla case which followed, von Pfeffer refused to recognise the need for the party courts' intervention: 'As far as we are concerned, the Uschla is not relevant ... There is no "dispute within the party". There is nothing that is in dispute.' In von Pfeffer's eyes, 'a personal dispute between party members (concerning party affairs) is not involved. The Gauleiter as individuals have taken no notice of Feder's monstrous accusations, have not felt personally insulted, nor are we disturbed by them. Only the "party organisation Ruhr" ... has been affected and disturbed. Only "the Gauleitung Ruhr" is affected (and on a secondary level the whole of the Gau, which is represented by the Gauleitung, as well as the Parteileitung, which is represented in the Gau by the Gauleitung). Anything smacking of matters related to honour, personal insult etc. has to be excluded.' Von Pfeffer went on to say that Feder had no 'position' in relation to the Gau as far as he was concerned. He was only a guest and speaker at the conference, and there was thus no question of the dispute being an 'internal party dispute'. Feder, he implied, had only himself to blame if he felt insulted by the tone of his letters to Munich, for 'he interfered in our organisation, that is, in matters which do not concern him. Not only that,

56) For the following see Feder to Hitler, PL, Murnau, 2 May 1926; reprinted in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.124-128.

but he interfered in a manner about which there can be no discussion.' Von Pfeffer took Feder's remarks as an insult to his authority as Gauleiter, a position which he considered as dominant in regional affairs, for he stated that 'it is the duty of every Gauleitung to prevent interference from unauthorised sources, especially if it takes on a damaging form. To reject such interference, and make sure that it does not happen again, is an organisational duty placed on us by our appointment as Gauleiter. Concerning our position and authority there can never be any doubt ...

If party member Feder ... is angry, he should not poke his nose into matters which are controlled by those in authority, persons who are in a position to react to his interference. The extent of the reaction is up to those on "duty"; this we cannot discuss either with the delinquent concerned nor with the Uschla.'

Von Pfeffer stated that 'if someone wants to criticise another Gauleitung, such as party comrade Feder, he should approach us, or the next highest authority, the Parteileitung or Adolf Hitler. Anything else is wrong.' 57) As von Pfeffer sent the party court packing, it was left to Hitler to intervene and settle the dispute. 58)

The problems with the Parteileitung were not the only ones facing the Gau. The tripartite leadership also proved increasingly unworkable. In practice von Pfeffer controlled much of the business of running the Gau because of Goebbels' frequent absences on 'speaking tours', and Kaufmann's constant illnesses. 59) Kaufmann did not always take kindly to von Pfeffer's ideas and methods. Since both based their relationship on military concepts, that is on the "command and obey" formula, compromises were rather difficult to achieve when conflicts arose. 60) On top of everything else, the collapse of the AG

57) Von Pfeffer to Uschla, Elberfeld, 21 May 1926: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

58) Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., entry 16 June 1926.

59) Ibid., entries March to May 1926.

60) Hüttenberger, op. cit., pp.34-35. Goebbels also clashed with von Pfeffer within one month of the creation of Gau Ruhr; Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., entry for 4 May 1926.

and Goebbels' increasingly pro-Hitler attitude created friction with Kaufmann, and to a lesser degree with von Pfeffer. Within two months the idealism which had produced Gau Ruhr had vanished. By the end of May Goebbels considered that there was a need for one Gauleiter to resolve the squabbles and disputes. ⁶¹⁾ There were also pressures from below to resolve the leadership question. The district leaders especially could not hide their dissatisfaction with the tripartite leadership and desired a return to the days when there had been only one Gauleiter. ⁶²⁾ In June 1926 the problem was finally settled. It was Kaufmann, much to Goebbels' disappointment, who emerged as the new head of the Gau. The choice of Kaufmann was determined to a significant degree by a district leaders' conference held on 6 June 1926, at which the name of Goebbels did not figure at all. ⁶³⁾ Kaufmann was finally appointed by Hitler on 20 June following consultations with Strasser, Lutze, Schmitz, von Pfeffer and Goebbels. ⁶⁴⁾

Kaufmann's appointment ended the unusual tripartite rule in the Gau, and from June 1926 Gau Ruhr conformed with the general party pattern. The possibility of a revived troika was removed with Hitler's appointment of von Pfeffer to head the SA in July and the choice of Goebbels to lead Gau Berlin by the Parteileitung in August 1926. Kaufmann's appointment was a more positive act of authority on Hitler's part, the first time that a Gauleiter in the Rhenish-Westphalian area owed his position to more than just the "Hausmacht" acquired through his own efforts. Kaufmann's dependence on Hitler's authority and good will was quickly driven home to him. Within the first month of his appointment his position was challenged by the Bochum SA (the so-called Regiment Ruhr), which did not accept him as Gauleiter. ⁶⁵⁾ Kaufmann was unable to overcome

61) "Many discussions with K. About the Gau leader. It can't go on like this. One man must be King". Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., 30 May 1926.

62) Hüttenberger, op. cit., p.38.

63) Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., entries for 5 June and 7 June 1926.

64) Ibid., entries for 19 June and 21 June 1926.

65) Gau SA Führung to FL NSDAP (no date): BAK NS I/342.

this opposition by himself, and Hitler was forced to go to Bochum to resolve the dispute and to confirm Kaufmann once more in his position. ⁶⁶⁾ The dispute so exhausted Kaufmann that he had to take a vacation. Life was not easy on his return. An immediate problem was the debts with which Gau Ruhr had been saddled by von Pfeffer, including some 16,000 Marks still owed by the old Gau Westphalia. ⁶⁷⁾ As Kaufmann had been under the impression that Gau Westphalia was free of debts at the time of the creation of Gau Ruhr, he refused to meet the demands and directed Gau Westphalia's creditors to von Pfeffer. This occasioned a conflict with von Pfeffer (who asserted that he had mentioned the debts of Gau Westphalia at the time of the fusion), which was to last for over a year. After a series of accusations and counter-accusations, the whole affair ended up before the party Uschla. The atmosphere was ultimately cleared by Hitler. On a visit to the Ruhr in October 1927 he managed to persuade Kaufmann to drop his case against von Pfeffer, which was finally wound up by Walter Buch, chairman of the Uschla.

In the course of 1926 and 1927 the position of Gauleiter and the function of the Gau administration became clearer as the control of the Parteileitung was asserted throughout the party structure. ⁶⁸⁾ Increasingly important were the bureaucratic checks imposed on the Gau administrations by the Bouhler-Schwarz machine in Munich. The administrative measures introduced by the latter forced the Gauleitung to adopt businesslike accounting and organisational procedures. ⁶⁹⁾ At the same time, the position of the Gauleiter, his function and responsibilities, were more closely defined. ⁷⁰⁾ The party directives gave the Gauleiter considerable power over the affairs of the party and its personnel on the Gau and sub-Gau levels, but in turn subjected him to the ultimate control of the

66) Report by Kaufmann to PL, Elberfeld, July 1926: BAK NS I/342.

67) On this see the correspondence between Bouhler and Kaufmann, 1 June 1927; and von Pfeffer to Hitler, 5 October 1927: HA 4/86. Further Hüttenberger, op. cit., pp.47-48; and Tyrell, op. cit., pp.181-185.

68) Orlow, op. cit., pp.80 ff.; Horn, op. cit., pp.278 ff..

69) Kaufmann's oral testimony, Nuremberg 1946, cited by Orlow, op. cit., p.82.

70) For the following see "Richtlinien für Gaue und Ortsgruppen der NSDAP", Munich, 1 July 1926, in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.230-232. These were slightly amended in November 1926 - Völkischer Beobachter, 24 November 1926.

Parteileitung. Thus the Gauleiter was always to be appointed by the Partei-
leitung. It was left to the Gauleiter, however, to determine his deputy, who
 only needed to be confirmed by the party headquarters. Each Gauleiter was also
 allowed to appoint a secretary and a treasurer (and their respective deputies).
 The Gauleiter's function was defined as being 'in the first place care for the
 regular administrative matters, the uniform implementation of the goals of the
 Movement, as well as expansion through the formation of new branches'. Beyond
 this, he was also to be very active as a party speaker, to regulate the cor-
 respondence between the branches and party headquarters, to check on the pay-
 ments of dues, and note those who joined and those who left the party, trans-
 mitting the information (at prescribed dates) to the Parteileitung. The
Gauleiter's function of controlling finance was also heavily emphasized.

In practice, of course, the powers of the Gauleiter within his Gau depen-
 ded less on his theoretical position than on his ability and personality. As
 regional leader, the executive and administrative arm of the Gau, he had to
 dominate his "court" and crush unrest in order to prevent a collapse of the
Gau as an efficient and effective instrument. Fortunately for the bulk of the
Gauleiter, there was an easy-going party leader, who could and did forgive
 the weaker elements in the Gau leadership corps, provided that their total
 devotion to the Führer was plain for all to see. Hitler's loyalty to his
 regional subordinates is well exemplified in the case of Kaufmann. In many
 ways Kaufmann failed to dominate ambitious and ruthless individuals within
 his Gau, with disastrous effects for the power of the party in the Ruhr region.
 In the spring of 1928 Kaufmann, having just emerged from the dispute with von
 Pfeffer, lurched towards a new crisis which cast serious doubt on his capacity
 for leadership. Its origins lay in a personal conflict between two of the
 more important district leaders, Terboven and Koch. 71) In December 1927 Koch
 accused Terboven of the misuse of party funds, an accusation which created much
 unrest in the Gau and threatened the unity of the movement. Kaufmann intervened

71) For the following see Hüttenberger, op. cit., p.48.

and forced Terboven to resign from his post. At this point Hitler involved himself on Terboven's behalf, re-instated him in his old position, and urged him to reach agreement with Kaufmann. Koch, encouraged by the turn of events, continued his intrigues in the first half of 1928 to the point at which the Bochum district leader, Josef Wagner, called for his exclusion from the party, a request which was rejected by Walter Buch. The decision in his favour was used by Koch to initiate a plan of action in August 1928, designed to remove Kaufmann and elevate himself to the position of Gauleiter. Kaufmann was accused of having perpetrated a series of financial misdemeanours in his capacity as Gauleiter. 72) In his accusation Koch catalogued Kaufmann's transgressions, which involved 'several acts of embezzlement, falsification of accounts and receipts', and, for good measure, the wearing of medals to which Kaufmann was not entitled. All these claims were substantiated with ample evidence accumulated from 1926 onwards! For Kaufmann, the affair proved very damaging, especially the charges of embezzlement, which were proved to be accurate at an investigation by the Party treasurer.

The Koch-Kaufmann affair had a detrimental effect on the running of the Gauleitung and on the Nazi party's efforts in the Ruhr in general. One result of the rumours flying around in the summer was that the Parteileitung was forced to prevent any 'larger meetings in the Gau until the clarification of certain questions'. 73) The Gau administration folded up as Kaufmann devoted all his attention to refuting Koch's accusations. The result of this state of affairs was 'the complete failure of the Gau leadership, an absolute calm and lack of movement, no appearance of the party in public, and complete stagnation ...'. 74) In this situation action by Hitler to solve the problem became imperative. His intervention in August 1928 led to a complete re-organisation of the Ruhr Gau, the removal of Koch to head the party in East

72) Koch to Uschla, Major Buch, Elberfeld, 25 August 1928: BAK NS I/340.

73) Reichsleitung to GL, Kaufmann, Munich, 27 July 1928: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

74) Police report, Elberfeld, August 1928: BAK NS I/340.

Prussia, and the transfer of Kaufmann to Hamburg. 75) The ambitious Terboven was allowed to take his district, Essen, out of Gau Ruhr, and it was ultimately to form the new Gau Essen. Part of Gau Ruhr went to form Gau Düsseldorf under Karl Florian. What remained of Gau Ruhr was placed under the control of Josef Wagner in October 1928.

The District and Branch Organisations.

The nature of the party structure of both Gau Westphalia and Gau Ruhr was strongly influenced by von Pfeffer's organisational concepts which he first employed during 1924 in the NSFB. Von Pfeffer believed strongly in a defined command structure, which involved the creation of the district unit to act as the connecting link between the Gau and local branches in the vertical administration. By the time of the creation of Gau Ruhr, the district organisation was already an integral and accepted part of the party organisation of Gau Westphalia. The new Ruhr Gau was arranged in the same way. Goebbels, who had made it clear to von Pfeffer that he did not like the "District System", did not prevent its introduction. 76) Gau Westphalia and then Gau Ruhr were thus the first Gaue to be organised on the generally accepted vertical structure in force later throughout the NSDAP.

The introduction of the district units had practical advantages for both the Gau and the branch organisations. In the re-establishment of the NSDAP in 1925 the existence of the district leaders in Westphalia, on whom devolved much administrative responsibility, spared the Gauleitung some of the administrative work which faced it as a result of Bouhler's determination to re-organise the movement and re-enrol its members. 77) For the Gauleiter the district leaders were also a means of finding out the situation of the party in the areas under their control. District leaders were a unifying factor

75) Hüttenberger, op. cit., pp.48-49.

76) Goebbels to von Pfeffer, Elberfeld, 21 January 1926: BAK NS I/339 Band I.

77) The district leader of Hamm, Dr Hurlbrinck, took the task of organising central Westphalia off the hands of von Pfeffer in March/April 1925; Beck, op. cit., p.566.

in the Gau and became more important as the party expanded in 1926. The large number of new and established branches, and the geographic extent of Gau Ruhr, made it impossible for the Gauleitung to give adequate attention to all branches under its control. 78)

The creation of the district unit and the construction of a unified vertical organisation in Gaue Westphalia and Ruhr threw up the same sort of problems as those which faced the Reichsparteileitung in relation to the Gauleitungen: their relationship to each other, the rights and duties of the respective parties, the question of how business was to be conducted, and so on. In the event, the relationship between the Gau, district and branch organisations evolved gradually in the light of experience. It was influenced by the attitude taken by the Gauleiter and party directives defining the relative powers of the Gauleiter and the branch leader. Important in this process of "evolution" was the ability of the Gauleiter to enforce his will on his subordinates, many of whom either had, or were in the process of developing, their own entrenched Hausmacht to support and strengthen their position. Von Pfeffer had a straightforward approach to the problem of manpower management which he had probably acquired in his Free Corps days. The basic features of his "system" are given in a reply to a request by Schlange (Gauleiter of Berlin) for information as to how Gau Ruhr was managed. Schlange evidently thought that he might learn from the pattern of administration in force in the Ruhr. Von Pfeffer stated that the basis of his organisational structure rested on two important points:

'First, it is necessary at all costs to establish subordinate leaders. Not so-called postmen fit only to pass on messages, nor itinerant controllers, but people who can work independently, who are active, productive, who have their own will and ideas. In order to develop such a type I consider it

78) Gau Ruhr was composed of 114 branches by May 1926; list given in "Mitgliederstand", 31 May 1926: BAK NS I/342.

necessary to delegate responsibility and extensive rights, the relinquishing of the latter being very hard for the beginner. The subordinate leader's position must be strong in relation to his followers; support them even if at times they are not totally in the right; never expose them.

Glory, praise and recognition gained by the Gauleitung should be passed on to the subordinate leaders (in front of their "people"). If one has to select between easy-going, brave subordinate leaders, who are stupid and dependent, and ambitious, troublesome and pig-headed ones, who are capable (even if they are only motivated by the thought of creating a personal position of power) - then always choose the latter type without hesitation.

But this presupposes that the leader is superior to the subordinate leaders, head and shoulders above them, or at least considers himself to be so and acts accordingly. See also ultima ratio: Dictatorship (Point 2).

Further it must be said that these basic principles do not suit anyone who has not had years of practice in constructing a movement according to his own tastes, and without further help.

Finally, these basic principles have realistic opponents, such as both of my dear colleagues, for example, who apply them only in a very limited fashion.

Second. Crass Dictatorship. ... Impose the dictatorship on the subordinate leaders ... (Gau) leaders should only intervene rarely; they should be seen more as the "last court of appeal"; at the same time they should be a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of the subordinate leaders.' 79)

District leaders, both in theory and practice, enjoyed considerable latitude under von Pfeffer's régime in Westphalia. The relationship between Gauleiter and district leader was outwardly calm. Von Pfeffer did not fear his subordinates; he was quite prepared to use the district leaders to support his own position, thus enhancing their status. In the Böger affair it was an

79) Von Pfeffer to Schlange, Elberfeld, 14 May 1926: BAK NS I/342.

investigation by the then six Westphalian district leaders which confirmed von Pfeffer's version. It was on the authority of the district leaders that 'Gauleiter von Pfeffer's innocence was proven'. 80) Von Pfeffer established a good relationship with his district leaders primarily because everyone knew precisely where they stood.

Under the tripartite rule to which Gau Ruhr was subjected in 1926 the relationship between Gauleiter and district leader threatened to break down. Goebbels caused the discontent. He did not think much of the district system, and always feared that the district leaders were 'getting too big for their boots'. 81) He habitually ignored the district leaders and sent information and directives straight to the branches and this became the subject of complaints to von Pfeffer by several district leaders soon after the creation of Gau Ruhr. 82) Goebbels' action produced several problems and dangers. In the first place, his habit of ignoring the district leaders undermined their position in relation to the branches within their areas of control. The lack of a uniform approach by the collective Gauleitung also opened the way for the district leaders (and even the branch leaders) to play one Gauleiter off against another. In one respect Goebbels' fear that the district leaders presented a formidable threat to the Gauleitung was justified. There was a danger that they might withdraw their allegiance from the Gauleitung and become instruments of the Parteileitung.

The case of Dr Hurlbrinck demonstrated the danger to the Gauleitung of rebellious district leaders. Hurlbrinck took offence at the interference by the Gauleitung in the SA affairs of his area, which occurred in spite of the promise apparently given by all three Gauleiter at the time of the creation of Gau Ruhr that they would refrain from involving themselves in SA matters in

80) "Verhandlung. NSDAP Gau Westfalen", Münster, z. Zt. Hamm/Westf., 13 Sept. 1925; the document gives a breakdown of the financial 'history' of the Gau, and was signed by Wagner, Herdejost, Hurlbrinck, Teipel, Homann and Barthel: HA 4/86.

81) Goebbels, Diary, op. cit., entry for 12 June 1926.

82) "Notiz", 8 April 1926: BAK NS I/338 Band I.

the districts without first informing district leaders. Thus when the Gauleitung invited the SA Leader of the Hellweg district to a conference in Hamm without informing Hurlbrinck, the latter took this as a breach of promise and complained to von Pfeffer, stating that no SA Leader would follow the commands of the Gauleitung without the district leaders' agreement. Hurlbrinck threatened to involve the Parteileitung by asking for an independent Munich representative to 'clear up the affairs of the Gau'. ⁸³⁾ In the resulting dispute, Hurlbrinck pressed home his threat to defend his independence by organising his own private district, the "Heart of the Ruhr", which he planned to subordinate directly to the Munich party centre. ⁸⁴⁾ The secret meeting organised by Hurlbrinck to realise this idea saw a general attack not only on all Gauleiter, but also on the Munich party headquarters, especially the 'incapable boss-rule of Bouhler and Schwarz'. This was a sign that at grassroots level the bureaucratisation of the party was much resented. The Gauleitung reacted to these developments by holding a general membership meeting in Elberfeld, to which all the other district leaders were invited, and at which Hurlbrinck was excluded from the party. Although von Pfeffer and Kaufmann described the whole affair as 'insignificant bickering in a gold-fish bowl such as happens daily throughout the Reich', it was damaging to the Gau. It called in question not only the authority of the Gauleitung, with all that that implied, but also seriously undermined the effectiveness of the party in Hurlbrinck's district. Many of the party members supported Hurlbrinck in his struggle against the Gauleiter, and the new district leader nominated by the Gauleitung to replace him was unable to restore the vigour of the movement in the Hellweg district. ⁸⁵⁾

The Gauleiter saw the threat to their authority and drew their own conclusions from the case. At the general membership meeting in May the Gauleiter

83) Hurlbrinck to GL, Hamm, 12 April 1926: BAK NS I/338 Band I.

84) The background and history of the dispute is given in the "Richtlinien für die General-Mitglieder-Versammlung", 22 May 1926, Elberfeld, 21 May 1926: BAK NS I/342.

85) Police report, Hamm, 6 June 1926: SAM I PA/281.

demanded a change in the Gau party regulations and asked the membership to grant the Gauleitung the right to exclude any member. To make this proposition more attractive, every unit in the party (i.e. district, branch) was to have the same right.⁸⁶⁾ Another slight procedural change was also suggested, namely that the exclusion of members from the regional movement was to be effective immediately before their cases were tried. This would have given the Gauleiter the opportunity to exclude refractory members before they could put their case to Munich. It is not clear whether these proposals were accepted at the meeting. Probably they were not, if one takes as evidence the difficulty the Gauleitung was to experience in later years in dealing with district leaders, for their removal could not be lightly undertaken or easily secured. Nor could the Gauleitung be sure that such exclusions were permanent, as is shown by Kaufmann's efforts to get rid of Terboven in 1928.

Most of the district leaders of Gau Westphalia - Gau Ruhr were to hold their posts uninterruptedly until the seizure of power by the party in 1933. Teipel, Homann, Herdejost, Wagner, Vetter were all deeply entrenched in their regions and wielded considerable power through the Hausmacht they acquired. The power of the district leaders varied considerably, of course, depending on the success and relative strength of the districts. The "star" district of the Westphalian region was that of Bochum under Wagner. It contained three-quarters of the Westphalian membership in 1926, with just over 1,000 members at the time of the creation of Gau Ruhr.⁸⁷⁾ In terms of branches Wagner's district was also in a class of its own. With 24 branches it had twice the number of the two next best Westphalian districts combined. Several districts, even by the spring of 1927, had very few branches. In the predominantly Catholic districts of Sauerland (4) and Münsterland (7), as well as in the strongly Protestant region of Siegerland (5), the party had hardly made any

86) "Richtlinien für die General-Mitglieder-Versammlung", Elberfeld, 21 May 1926; BAK NS I/342.

87) The Bochum district membership stood at 1,008 at that time - see report by Wagner to GL, March 1926; BAK NS I/342.

impact. 88)

The position of the district leaders was not an enviable one. Unlike the Gauleiter and branch leaders, who held officially recognised administrative posts and whose authority and status were defined (albeit loosely) by party directives, the district leaders were not officially recognised party functionaries. Their existence was at the discretion of the Gauleiter and it was not necessarily permanent even where district leaders had formed part of the Gau administration for some years. At the command of the Gauleiter they could in theory, and practice, quite suddenly disappear en bloc. 89) To add to the uncertainty of their tenure, district leaders were faced with a constant demand to sacrifice all for the movement. Though the income derived from their share of the branch membership dues was sufficient to meet the basic costs incurred by the district administrative machinery, the district leaders were apparently unpaid, or at most very poorly paid. This fact did not prevent the Gauleitung from demanding the utmost from them, and even from threatening their removal if they did not demonstrate sufficient drive and activity. The threat loomed even over the successful Josef Wagner, who became aware in the spring of 1926 that 'he would have to concentrate more on his party post or give up his occupation'. Since he had a family to support, the situation which faced him was a most difficult one because he 'did not wish to leave the party or give up his work for the movement'. 90)

The powers of the district leader were not even loosely defined. The degree of authority vested in him was thus very much dependent on the attitude of the Gauleitung. 91) Under von Pfeffer's "rule" the power enjoyed by the district leaders was extensive, as von Pfeffer did not believe in appointing nonentities. He selected capable people with minds of their own and ability to exercise independent control. The fact that the Westphalian district leaders occupied their positions into the 'thirties (in general only promotion

88) "Anschriften der OGL Gau Ruhr", Spring 1927: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

89) This happened in Gau Hanover-North; Noakes, op. cit., p.105.

90) Wagner to von Pfeffer, Bochum, 28 April 1926: BAK NS I/342.

91) Of interest is the breakdown of the functions of the district leader in Gau Thuringia - reprinted in Tyrell, op. cit., pp.237-239.

produced changes) indicates, at the very least, their talent for survival. Von Pfeffer's attitude of investing maximum power in his district leaders was crucial in the development of their functions, which in several aspects reflected the powers of the Gauleiter. Interesting in this respect is that the Westphalian district leaders had sufficient authority in practice not only to exclude troublesome individuals from local branches, but also to remove incapable branch leaders. Wagner exercised authority in this direction in several cases. The 30-strong Haltern branch, where local leadership disputes led to chaos, was simply dissolved by him after the removal of the local branch leader. The initiative for the purge was Wagner's, who merely informed the Gauleitung of his act. ⁹²⁾ Towards the end of 1926 Wagner also carried out another purge of 'disaffected members' in the Bochum branch, who were spreading 'lies and slanderous accusations' against local party members and against Wagner himself. Again, there was no reference to the Gauleitung which supported Wagner's act in retrospect. ⁹³⁾ The Arnsberg district leader Dr Teipel also availed himself of the power to remove branch leaders who failed to carry out their duties satisfactorily or showed signs of personal weakness; thus the branch leader of Meschede was replaced because of his 'frequent drunkenness'. ⁹⁴⁾ Teipel, who exercised a strict control over his district, was always ready to step in to shake up local leaders at the first sign of slackness. He was not prepared to tolerate indifferent leadership on the local level, and was quick to remove branch leaders if they proved ineffective. Unlike Wagner, who acted rather arbitrarily in his district, Teipel was less dictatorial in his methods in that he always called special membership meetings to support his pre-determined decisions. ⁹⁵⁾

Able district leaders were crucial in the development of the party.

92) Wagner to GL Ruhr, Bochum, 25 May 1926; BAK NS I/342.

93) "Bekanntmachung", Gau Ruhr (no date); expulsion dated 16 November 1926; BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203.

94) Teipel to GL Ruhr, Arnsberg, 20 March 1926; BAK NS I/338 Band I.

95) Teipel to GL Ruhr, 20 March and 9 April 1926; BAK NS I/338 Band I.

They exercised guidance, gave encouragement to branch leaders, and assisted local branches in furthering the cause. Usually they were the most active speakers and chief campaigners in their area. Through them, the party membership was cemented more securely into the Gau framework. They settled local disputes as far as possible before a public outbreak of discontent could damage the image of the party. Since they were always on the look-out for possible trouble, their presence on the local level undoubtedly quashed much unrest which would only have penetrated to the Gauleitung level when it was too late to take preventive action. The value of district leaders was self-evident. In several Westphalian districts no progress was made until an efficient district leader had been found.

A dedicated district leader could do much to further the activity of the party through appeals to the more popular speakers to visit their area. Teipel, for example, who led the small branches of the Sauerland region, managed to persuade a number of regional and national party figures to come and speak in what was a relative backwater: Feder, Goebbels, Kaufmann, Gregor Strasser, among others, all spoke in the area in the spring of 1926. ⁹⁶⁾ Homann, the Bielefeld district leader, provided constant drive in an area in which the NSDAP found it difficult to make anything but very slow progress at first. He failed to be deterred by a number of disastrous meetings and continued to organise events at which nationally 'important' figures spoke. He himself was permanently on the move in his area, establishing branches and carrying the "message" to rural districts. ⁹⁷⁾ Wagner, too, was exceedingly active. Though he was head of a district with the largest number of branches, its geographical compactness made his job easier.

From 1926 the district sub-division of Gau Ruhr was a permanent feature of the regional organisation. The sheer size of the Gau enhanced the value of the district leaders. It would have been almost impossible for Kaufmann

⁹⁶⁾ See reports in BAK NS I/338 Band I.

⁹⁷⁾ Report by Homann to GL Ruhr, Bielefeld, 20 May 1926: BAK NS I/342.

to change von Pfeffer's organisational pattern without a marked decline in the efficiency of the Gau as a whole. By the spring of 1927 the fact that there were 114 branches (some of which were admittedly little more than party "cells") comprising Gau Ruhr made sufficient personal contact between branch and Gauleitung virtually impossible. In this situation the district organisation was a valuable unit in cementing the vertical structure of the party. The expansion of the party in terms of membership and branches demanded a sub-division of the Gaue, just as the growth of the NSDAP on the national level necessitated the existence of Gau administrations.

At the grass roots level the key figure, naturally enough, was the branch leader. His personality, ability and dedication were as crucial to the welfare of the party on the local level as adequate personnel were vital to the smooth functioning of the higher vertical administrative units. Branch leaders in general "emerged" at the local level, and were men who had usually made a name for themselves in local völkisch-National Socialist circles, men who could command the respect and support of the majority of the members. Normally the most dedicated and active individual secured control over branches in a democratic election, a procedure which was the norm in the early years of the party.⁹⁸⁾ At local level, the branch leader exercised considerable power. He could nominate individuals to other branch positions in the same way as Gauleiter could appoint their "team". The Gauleitung had, in theory, no control over who became branch leader. An amendment to the party statutes in November 1926 did state, however, that 'the election of a branch leader must be acknowledged by the Gauleitung, and the elected person confirmed in writing'.⁹⁹⁾ In practice, the Westphalian branch leaders were not totally secure in their position, and could be removed for a variety of reasons, as Wagner and Teipel demonstrated in several instances.¹⁰⁰⁾

98) In the "Richtlinien für Gaue und Ortsgruppen der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiter Partei", Munich, 1 July 1926, it was stated that "Der I. Vorsitzende wird gewählt durch eine ordentliche Mitgliederversammlung der Ortsgruppe durch Zuruf"; Tyrell, op. cit., p.231.

99) Völkischer Beobachter, 24 November 1926.

100) See above, p. 258.

A truly democratic choice was not offered to the membership of the great majority of branches in the refounded NSDAP. In most cases the existing leaders of the NSFB assumed control in 1925. There are indications that elections were held only in those branches in which a split within the ranks of the NSFB left a leaderless pro-Hitler group. This happened in Bielefeld, where the branch leadership of the NSFB, alongside the majority of the members, voted to join von Graefe's DVFB in February 1925. This left a small Hitler-orientated group of around twenty to found an NSDAP branch. In the first instance, the group only elected a provisional committee to lead the branch, and decided to elect a branch leader and local party committee only after the members had got to know each other better and were in a position to determine who were the most capable members to lead the local group. In the end Fritz Homann was elected first branch leader, a post he held until his elevation to the district leadership by von Pfeffer at the end of 1925.¹⁰¹⁾

The Gauleiter and the district leader did not generally interfere with the local branch leaders unless rivalry between opposing factions, usually the sign of an incapable leader, made progress impossible. Intervention by superior party officials could prove disastrous. The best safeguard of branch vitality and harmony on the local level was a branch leader who "emerged" because of his talent and ability. This fact was driven home to the Gau hierarchy in several cases. The removal of Wilczeck as branch leader of Dortmund in 1926 because of his 'unsuitability' inaugurated two years of unrest and the local situation was not stabilised until the branch fell into the hands of Heinrich König in 1927.¹⁰²⁾ The interference of the Gauleitung in the affairs of the Hamm branch in 1925 - the elected branch leader Schröder was removed owing to his 'inability to revitalise the local movement' - virtually destroyed local activity in the town and saw the emergence of an

¹⁰¹⁾ Hiemisch, op. cit., pp.7-9.

¹⁰²⁾ On Wilczeck's removal see the correspondence between GL and BL Hellweg, 27 April 1926; Bouhler to GL Ruhr, 2 September 1926; BAK Sammlung Schumacher 203; also Beck, op. cit., p.302.

independent 'Märkerbund' which followed National Socialist goals, but had no direct contact with the Gau administration. 103) The fortunes of the NSDAP only gradually revived in Hamm during the course of 1926. 104)

Local rivalry often led to a mass exit of party members who lost interest because of the endless squabbling. 105) Insensitive leadership could have the same effect. The leader of the Recklinghausen branch, Kleine, alienated his members by leaving them in the lurch after a Dortmund meeting at which Hitler was scheduled to be the main attraction. Not only did Hitler fail to speak, owing to a police ban, which in itself 'disappointed many of the members', but they themselves were left to arrange their own transport back to Recklinghausen. Kleine, who had brought the group to Dortmund by lorry, used this transport (paid for by the branch membership!) to take several party officials to their homes. His own members were left to walk back to Recklinghausen. As they had also been stoned by Communists in Dortmund, their anger was understandable, as was their declaration 'never to engage in such stupidity again'. 106) Frequent changes in the branch leadership, with the resultant lack of continuity and stability, were also damaging to the party. A few branches saw many changes: Wattenscheid had seven different branch leaders between 1925 and 1929, and Menden had five during the same period. 107) Several of these changes were due to branch leaders seeking employment elsewhere. Where an 'entrenched' branch leader moved away the effect could also be disastrous. The Lünen branch lost its party leader in 1928 and almost collapsed as a consequence. Membership declined from 15 to 4 in a matter of months, and party activity virtually ceased. 108)

103) Police report, Hamm, 6 June 1925: SAM I PA/281.

104) Beck, op. cit., p.336.

105) The Recklinghausen police noted that in one branch, that of Bottrop, some 20 members left the party due to "conflicts among the leadership"; police reports, Recklinghausen, 12 August and 31 December 1926: SAM Nr. 2076. See also police report, Hamm, 6 June 1925: SAM I PA/281.

106) Police report, Recklinghausen, 25 October 1925: SAM VII - 64 Band I.

107) Beck, op. cit., pp.315-316.

108) Ibid., op. cit., p.336.

The stability of the branch leadership corps in the 50 or so branches composing the Westphalian NSDAP is a striking feature of the Nazi organisation of the province. Many of the branches were led by the same person until the seizure of power, when most of them were elevated into lucrative local and regional administrative posts. The stability is related to the unenviable position branch leaders had in the nineteen-twenties. Their importance, as heads of what were in most cases small, insignificant branches was not such as to encourage take-over bids, since there was little to gain except the problems associated with the post. Local in-fighting increased in the early 'thirties when the ambitious opportunists joined the party as it became a political force of consequence. This raised the status of the branch leader and increased his power of patronage. Another reason for the low turn-over in the leadership of most branches was the small membership in the bulk of the branches and the limited leadership material thus available. As a consequence branch leaders who performed their functions with a modicum of dedication were relatively secure in their posts. Their security of tenure was assisted by the fact that from 1926 onwards new branches were founded primarily on the initiative of the district leaders, who nominated, and backed, branch leaders. 109)

This tied the branch leader more closely to the district leader. With the construction of a vertical administrative machine in the post-1925 period the branch leaders were rapidly integrated into the overall administrative structure of the Gau. The independence of the branch leader became a thing of the past. District and Gau meetings and conferences tied the leadership corps more closely together. The itinerant district leaders increasingly

109) This 'nomination system' was especially common in the Bielefeld area, where Homann was directly responsible for founding the Tengern, Bünde, Bad Oeynhausien, Dünne, Herford and Minden branches - see Homann to Goebbels 17 december 1925, and Homann to GL Ruhr, Bielefeld, 20 May 1926: BAK NS I/342; further Hiemisch, op. cit., p.15. Teipel was also very active in the formation of the few branches which existed in his area - Beck, op. cit., p.383. There are also isolated examples of branch leaders nominating leaders of branches founded by them. Thus the branch leader of Werne appointed the branch leader of Lünen at the foundation of the branch - Beck, op. cit., p.347.

asserted their authority and regularised the relationship between Gau and branch. 110) The net result was that a greater cohesion developed in Westphalia-Gau Ruhr, with each unit of the party fulfilling its allotted function. The only recurring problem was the irregular payment of membership dues by the branches to the Gauleitung, which periodically exasperated the Gauleiter. 111) But even in this aspect, the number of branches defaulting was a small percentage of the whole as party discipline increased.

The horizontal organisation of the branches was as rudimentary as that of the Gauleitung. Until 1928-29 local party offices were a rarity, even in the larger branches; the administrative work was carried on from the homes of the branch leaders. The regular weekly or fortnightly meetings of the members (compulsory in many branches) were almost invariably held in a room provided by a friendly publican, whose "idealism" may well have been influenced by the financial rewards he received over the years. The acquisition of party premises, primitive as they tended to be even in the later period, usually marked a decisive turning-point in the annals of local party histories. 112) The low membership, and hence the lack of funds, prevented real bureaucratisation at the local level. It also kept the local party hierarchy down to the minimum: branch leader, secretary, treasurer, and their respective deputies, propaganda leader and SA leader were the sole functionaries in most branches. 113) In the larger branches the party organisation had more developed horizontal structures. In Hattingen the large membership allowed, and necessitated to some degree, a much more elaborate administrative set-up. By 1928 the local party

110) Teipel, for example obtained an accurate picture of his district by enforcing monthly 'activity reports' to be sent in monthly by the branch leaders. See the reports from the branches of Arnsberg, Meschede, Soest in BAK NS I/338 Band I.

111) Complaints on this 'defect' in "Rundschreiben Nr. 76" (24 April 1928), No. 77 (7 May 1928) and No. 79 (6 June 1928) in HA 5/136.

112) Hiemisch's account of the acquisition of 'office facilities' by the Bielefeld branch is typical; Hiemisch, op. cit., p.45.

113) Several of these posts were often held by the same individual in the early years. In Bielefeld Homann combined the functions of SA leader, treasurer and branch leader; Hiemisch, op. cit., p.11.

organisation consisted of the branch leader, secretary, treasurer and their deputies, plus the chairmen of a number of committees responsible for propaganda, youth organisation, sport, and the branch *Uschla*. Within the branch administration the definition of function and spheres of influence were already well defined. Thus the branch statutes emphasized that 'the heads of the committees and the business managers of the individual committees had sole responsibility for their areas and were independent of the branch committee and of the branch leader'. An exception was the organisation committee, which followed 'the instructions of the branch committee of the party'. The business manager of the branch and heads of the individual committees were allowed direct contact with the Gauleiter and the Reichsleitung without reference to the branch leader. 114)

The refinement of the Hattingen branch was an exception, not the rule. Branch organisations in general were simple and basic. Financial weakness made sure that the growth of the bureaucracy was kept to a minimum, not only on the branch level, but also on the Gau and district levels.

Techniques and Themes of Gau Propaganda.

Propaganda played a crucial part in the growth and success of the NSDAP. Indeed, as one authority has noted, propaganda 'became the foundation of the party's fortunes'. 115) Hitler himself placed great emphasis on propaganda, and gave much attention to its function and organisation in Mein Kampf. 116) For Hitler the chief purpose of propaganda was to 'attract support' through the dissemination of the 'idea', the ultimate objective being 'to force a doctrine on the whole people'. 117) This objective pre-supposed that the 'idea' was an attractive, saleable commodity. Propaganda was to make sure that it was. It also demanded an organisation able to deliver the 'idea' on as broad a front as possible.

114) Report by Hattingen OG, 26 April 1928: HA 5/136.

115) Z.A.B. Zeman, Nazi Propaganda, O.U.P., 1973, p.XIII.

116) Mein Kampf, op. cit., pp.421-436; pp.527-543.

117) Ibid., p.529.

Until the late nineteen-twenties the Nazi Party did not possess an adequate propaganda machine to expound the creed of National Socialism. Lack of funds, inadequate and unschooled personnel, a paucity of able speakers, and the small national, and even less significant regional, press all restricted the effectiveness of the party's propaganda efforts. Despite these weaknesses, the period 1925 to 1928 was crucial in the history of Nazi propaganda in that it saw the first rationalisation of the national and regional propaganda organisation. For the Nazis the period was of great importance for testing and perfecting a series of propaganda techniques. The knowledge gained in the organisation and projection of propaganda was of inestimable value in the period of rapid party growth after 1928.

The material documenting the nature and development of propaganda in Gau Westphalia and Gau Ruhr demonstrates not only the process by which a more effective propaganda arm was created, but also the increasing sophistication and skill of the party's propaganda activity. The first year after the re-formation of the party was one in which the Nazi propagandists went through a form of apprenticeship which stood them in good stead in the years to come. A single example, though a significant one, that of Goebbels, may be cited. At the beginning of his career he was a poor and inexperienced speaker. His first speech to the Bielefeld branch in July 1925 was so 'boring' that 'a large number of people left before the end of the meeting'. Goebbels, 'who was just starting to speak at public meetings' suffered from a defect shared by many novices, namely, a 'failure to end his speech'. ¹¹⁸⁾ By the time of his second appearance in Bielefeld, at the end of November 1925, he 'was unrecognisable'. Not only was his speech humorous, but he was able to deal effectively with Communist hecklers, and the whole meeting turned out to be 'a great success'. ¹¹⁹⁾ Though the transformation may be somewhat exaggerated, the experience Goebbels acquired as one of the most active speakers in Rhineland-Westphalia in 1925 had its effect.

¹¹⁸⁾ Hiemisch, op. cit., p.35.

¹¹⁹⁾ Ibid., pp.35-36.

Until 1926 the task of organising propaganda and determining its themes was left largely in the hands of the various Gauleiter and other regional party officials. The Parteileitung turned its attention to this aspect of party activity after the centralisation of party organisation had been largely accomplished. Until the spring of 1926 the propaganda of the Nazis in Rhineland-Westphalia was conditioned primarily by regional and local factors. Party branches, beyond the odd general directive which came from the Gauleitung from time to time, carried out their propaganda activities within the limitations of their own ideas and resources. In general local branches did not develop distinct propaganda sections within the horizontal party framework. 120) Until 1926 the Gau and district levels of Gau Ruhr lacked propaganda specialists. To the Gauleiter and district leaders the organisation of propaganda was but one of many diverse functions. The chief involvement of the Gauleitung tended to be the procurement and allotment of the limited 'speaking talent' available to the movement. The Gauleiter was primarily concerned with rewarding the more active branches by allocating to them important national and regional speakers. 121) The district leaders' chief contribution to the propaganda efforts of the branches under their control lay in their services as speakers. In general the content and form of propaganda was left to local initiative in the years immediately after the re-organisation and Munich headquarters showed little interest in this aspect of party affairs.

This changed markedly from the spring of 1926 onwards, after which Nazi propaganda became more systematized and centralised, both at the national and regional levels. The initiative for the formation of a more effective propaganda organisation came from the Parteileitung in the form of a circular sent out by Bouhler to party branches in March 1926. 122) The new concern

120) There is reference to the existence of a Propagandaleiter in only one Westphalian party branch in 1925, that of Hattingen; Beck, op. cit., p.221.

121) Goebbels' first two appearances in Bielefeld in 1925 were due to arrangements made by Gauleiter von Pfeffer; Hiemisch, op. cit., p.35.

122) For the following see 'Rundschreiben an die OG der NSDAP', Munich, 20 March 1926; BAK Sammlung Schumacher 373. The circular is reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.595-597.

shown by Munich in this area of party activity was linked to the virtually national speaking ban imposed on Hitler, which hit the party badly by denying it the use of its most effective weapon. An attack on the ban was to be the first major task of the propaganda network as proposed by the March directive, which was to be co-ordinated through the VB. Two additional considerations also moved the Partelleitung. There was the simple fact that the NSDAP did not possess a centralised, co-ordinated propaganda arm, a defect which handicapped the movement: 'The failure of a continuously active propaganda network was one reason why those masses enthusiastic for our idea could not be progressively enlightened. For one could not expect that the leaders of the young groups in our movement in the Reich could utilise any political situation in their propaganda without knowing the attitude of the Partelleitung. Nor were they in a position to bear the costs of the enlightening of the public.' The Rundschreiben noted that this placed the NSDAP in a weak position in relation to other parties, especially the 'marxist' parties, from which the National Socialists could and should learn a thing or two: 'If we want to fight the opposition we must review the methods used by it to secure power ... If we look at this question we meet in the first instance the comprehensive propaganda activity of the opposition, especially that of the marxist parties. If we look at the propaganda system of the latter more closely we find the cell system which covers the whole of the Reich. This is fed from one centre, receiving its direction not only monthly, but weekly if certain developments occur which can be exploited.' In order to remedy the situation the party headquarters urged the formation of propaganda cells which were to be attached to each branch. Their leaders were to be in direct contact with the Propaganda-leitung attached to party headquarters in Munich. These propaganda cells were to be functioning from 25 March at the latest and were to participate in the first concentrated national propaganda campaign attacking the ban on Hitler's public speaking. This campaign was to be inaugurated by a special edition of the VB dealing with themes such as 'Who is Adolf Hitler?', 'What does Adolf

Hitler want?', 'What has Adolf Hitler said?', and 'Why is Adolf Hitler no longer permitted to speak?' ¹²³⁾ Attached to the Rundschreiben were specific instructions outlining the steps to be taken by each branch in the creation of a propaganda cell. ¹²⁴⁾ The cells were to be made up of male and female members in the proportion of two-thirds male to one-third female, and were to be attached to the party branch in the form of a propaganda committee under an elected leader (Obmann). The members of the propaganda cell were to be drawn from those who were imbued with 'fanaticism for our movement'. Care was to be taken that these individuals represented diverse occupational groups. The propaganda cells were to be in direct contact with the Propagandaleitung attached to the VB.

The response to these instructions in Gau Ruhr at the Gau and district levels was instant. How far the different branches reacted, especially the smaller branches, is more difficult to determine. Certainly the Gauleitung emphasized the 'Why is Hitler not allowed to speak?' theme. The Bochum district leader Wagner, following instructions from Gau headquarters, switched his propaganda campaign to the new theme throughout his district. ¹²⁵⁾ A series of meetings in Recklinghausen, Buer, Bottrop and Osterfeld in April and May were exclusively devoted to the topic. At each meeting those present were encouraged to sign a petition protesting against the ban. ¹²⁶⁾ Agitation on identical lines was also pursued in the Bielefeld area by district leader Homann. ¹²⁷⁾ In the course of 1926 much greater energy was invested in the organisation of an effective propaganda arm in Westphalia, and the basis of an efficient network was laid. ¹²⁸⁾

The interest shown by party headquarters in projecting more uniform,

123) The ban on Hitler's public speaking was the theme of the first concentrated Nazi propaganda campaign in April 1926 - Zeman, op. cit., p.8.

124) 'Organisationsplan zur Einrichtung von Propagandazellen der NSDAP'; copy in HA 70/1529. Also in Beck, op. cit., pp.597-598.

125) Wagner to GL Ruhr, Bochum, 7 April 1926: BAK NS I/338, Bd. I.

126) Police report, Recklinghausen, 22 May 1926: SAM Nr. 2076.

127) Hoamm to GL Ruhr, 20 May 1926: BAK NS I/342.

128) See Wagner's 'Bericht über die Bezirkstagung in Bochum am 3 Oktober 1926'; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., p.571.

centralised Nazi propaganda did not destroy the flexibility of approach which had previously characterised the regional propaganda effort. Individual branch leaders and the new propaganda committees were astute enough to continue to frame their propaganda to suit local conditions. They were encouraged to do so by Goebbels, responsible for the organisation of propaganda in Gau Ruhr for much of 1926. Although he accepted the need for a common national approach on certain issues, Goebbels thought that entirely uniform propaganda approach was premature. He was emphatic that differing political situations in various parts of the Gau had always to be taken into consideration. Meetings designed to appeal to specific social groupings or economic interests had to be framed accordingly. ¹²⁹⁾ Branch leaders in general framed their propaganda to take account of such tactical and local requirements. Homann, for example, took great care to give to his audiences the type of material he thought they would like to hear. Thus at a meeting to which members of the Sparerschutzverbände were invited the speech dealt primarily with the theme of revaluation of the losses occasioned by the inflation. ¹³⁰⁾ At meetings held in Bad Oeynhausen, a spa 'much frequented by Jews', the major emphasis of Nazi speeches was on anti-Semitism, which was designed to arouse the supposed prejudices of the local population. ¹³¹⁾ At meetings where the bulk of the audience was composed of farmers, their particular interests and grievances were played upon. ¹³²⁾

The flexibility of its approach to propaganda was but one feature of the Nazi Party. Another was its constant energy. Perpetual motion, even when the results were negligible, was the hall-mark of the NSDAP. Although most of the party's meetings were concentrated in the election periods, the Nazis continued their efforts in between. In this respect the party was out of step

129) Extracts from Goebbels' speech at the Bochum district conference of 3 October 1926: in Beck, op. cit., p.572.

130) Homann to Goebbels, Bielefeld, 21 July 1925: BAK NS I/341.

131) Homann to Goebbels, Bielefeld, 27 January 1926: BAK NS I/341.

132) Homann to GL Ruhr, Bielefeld, 20 May 1926: BAK NS I/342.

with the general line of political activity pursued by other parties, with the exception of the KPD. One consequence of the regularity with which meetings were held was that the local and regional press gave much more attention to the NSDAP at times during which no other party activity could be reported. The party functionaries were proud of their continuous activism, the number of meetings held being, in their eyes, a yardstick of their degree of commitment to the party and 'idea'. Even such 'politically unseasonal' periods as the holiday months of August and September were used by Wagner to continue, as he proudly stated, 'the struggle'.¹³³⁾ Contemporary police reports on Nazi activity reflect astonishment at the vigour of the effort and the large number of meetings held by the party, despite the fact that many were only 'poorly attended'.¹³⁴⁾ The Nazis themselves seemed to obtain a perverse satisfaction from meetings which attracted only a handful of people. Failure stimulated their effort and led to an intensification of propaganda activity in some branches.¹³⁵⁾ The greatest joy was derived by the Nazi hierarchy from meetings which ended in brawls with left-wing opponents. Such occasions gave much free publicity to the movement in the press and stimulated interest.¹³⁶⁾ In the absence of an effective Nazi press, propaganda in the neutral and opposition press was a good substitute.

Public meetings were one of the most popular means by which the NSDAP attempted to win support and draw attention to itself, but the propaganda techniques employed and developed to advance the cause were very diverse. Much emphasis was placed on routine work (Kleinarbeit), such as door to door canvassing, the distribution of pamphlets, Nazi literature and newspapers, techniques

133) Report by Wagner to GL Elberfeld, Bochum, 25 September 1926: BAK NS I/340.

134) Cf. the numerous reports for the year 1926, especially those of the police authorities in the Recklinghausen region, in SAM Nr. 2076. Further SAM VII - 2 Bd. 5 - for 1927-1928.

135) See the example of Bielefeld, Hiemisch, op. cit., p.14.

136) Beck, op. cit., p.350. Such calculations influenced Goebbels' approach in Berlin - see the introduction and documentation by M. Broszat, 'Die Anfänge der Berliner NSDAP 1926/27', Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 3, 1960, pp.85-118.

copied from the KPD. Goebbels, as long as he was in charge of the Gau propaganda organisation, placed great value on these forms of activity and believed that such 'petty work' often did more to secure support than public meetings.¹³⁷⁾ These activities also had the important advantage of costing very little apart from the energy and enthusiasm of the party faithful. Very important too were the weekly or fortnightly discussion evenings (Sprechabende), which by 1926 became a regular feature of Nazi branch activity. Party members were encouraged to bring their friends and 'guests' and in many branches attendance at these meetings was virtually compulsory. It was a minimum sign of involvement.¹³⁸⁾ Their function was not only to win over new recruits, but to keep the existing membership intact.¹³⁹⁾ In many branches the meetings were used to school the party members by means of lectures on historical and political themes and discussions of the writings of party leaders, especially Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'.¹⁴⁰⁾

An increasing role in the Nazi propaganda repertoire was played by meetings ostensibly non-political in character, which attracted apolitical elements of the population. Patriotic celebrations were very common, and such events as 'Sedan celebrations' became annual fixtures in a number of branches. 'Winter feasts', 'Christmas feasts', 'German Evenings', and 'German Days' were popular Nazi exercises designed to interest people sympathetic to the party. Of these the most popular event was the 'German Evening', a mixture of musical entertainment, short plays and dancing displays, knitted together by a number of short speeches reminding the participants about the organisers of the show.¹⁴¹⁾ More impressive and more costly, and hence rarer, were the 'German Days', veritable party jamborees which generally concentrated the efforts of the regional movement in one town. The first 'German Day' in Gau Ruhr, centred

137) Goebbels' speech at the Bochum district conference, October 1926, in Beck, op. cit., p.572.

138) See "Rundschreiben 2 NSDAP OG Witten", 12 October 1926: reprinted in Beck, op. cit., p.569.

139) Cf. the case of OG Hamm, Beck, op. cit., p.336.

140) Hiemisch, op. cit., p.15; also Beck, op. cit., p.394.

141) Beck, op. cit., p.390.

on Herne in June 1926, mobilised some 3,000 SA and NSDAP members, and was attended by the chief Nazi notables of the region, including the three Gau-leiter. ¹⁴²⁾ The 'German Days' were carefully organised to project an image of strength and vigour. Maximum participation of the regional party members was ensured by the various branch leaders, who viewed participation as a matter of 'duty'. ¹⁴³⁾ Torch-light processions, propaganda marches, speeches, military displays and martial music were the staple ingredients of such events.

The propaganda techniques developed by the party in Gau Ruhr were employed to win over support from all sections of society. The content of the Nazi 'message' in Westphalia was strongly influenced by two factors: the sociological composition of the population and the attitudes and beliefs of the regional party hierarchy. Both factors led to the development of a distinctly 'left-wing' orientation designed to attract the working class, the dominant social grouping in the region. ¹⁴⁴⁾ The emphasis on winning over the working class was by 1926 an established feature of Nazi agitation in Rhineland-Westphalia. ¹⁴⁵⁾ The overtures to the worker had not been without success, and many branches, especially those in the Ruhr towns, had a membership drawn almost exclusively from the working class. ¹⁴⁶⁾

The tripartite leadership which took over Gau Ruhr in 1926, barring von Pfeffer reservations, projected a 'left-wing' image. Goebbels, one of the principal speakers in Rhineland-Westphalia from 1925 to 1926, pursued his own

142) Beck, op. cit., p.390.

143) See the instructions given by the branch leader of Witten to ensure a full turn-out at the Herne meeting - "Rundschreiben I NSDAP OG Witten", 20 July 1926; reprinted in Beck, op. cit., pp.568-569.

144) In the Ruhr area, where the party was most active, some 75 to 80 per cent of the population was 'working class' - report by Police President, Bochum, 21 November 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. I.

145) See chapters 4 and 5 of this study. In the adjoining electoral district of Düsseldorf-Ost, which had a similar social composition, early Nazi efforts were almost totally orientated towards winning over working class support; cf. Kühr, op. cit., p.140.

146) Beck, op. cit., p.266 ff.. Report by Landrat, Beckum, 19 March 1926; SAM VII - 64 Bd. I. By the end of 1930 57.7 per cent of the membership of the NSDAP in the 'Ruhr industrial region' of Westphalia were workers - report "An die RL der NSDAP-Organisationsabteilung", Bochum, 7 November 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. I.

form of 'socialist' creed, condemned capitalism, though not capital, and generally despised the bourgeoisie. ¹⁴⁷⁾ Kaufmann reserved his abuse for the SPD, whose leaders he depicted as mere tools of the capitalist system, a system under which he thought the German people had no hope of redressing their wrongs. ¹⁴⁸⁾ Ideologically both inclined towards the pro-labour and anti-capitalist 'socialism' propagated by Gregor Strasser. ¹⁴⁹⁾ 'Socialist' sentiments were also a common feature of speeches by local party functionaries. In an effort to attract working class support they attempted to project the idea that the NSDAP was 'the only party of true socialism'. ¹⁵⁰⁾ Nazi speakers emphasized their 'proletarian' nature, and in isolated instances went so far as to state that the programme of the KPD and NSDAP were 'almost the same'. ¹⁵¹⁾ The nationalisation plans of the party, especially of the banks and other financial institutions, were also emphasized. ¹⁵²⁾

The 'socialist' line was partly determined by the environment in which the party worked. In the urban centres of the Ruhr the effort to attract support inevitably involved an appeal to working class audiences. Nazi public meetings attracted a high number of KPD and SPD supporters, on some of whom the combination of nationalism and socialism, constantly expounded by the party, had an effect. On occasions the Nazis were able to win over notable figures from the socialist opposition. ¹⁵³⁾ There was a genuine desire to reach the worker. The organisers of meetings in Dortmund laid special emphasis

- 147) Goebbels' views emerge from his 'Lenin or Hitler?' speech, a great favourite of his, frequently given in Westphalia. It is reprinted in Zeman, op. cit., pp.181-211.
- 148) Analysis of Kaufmann's themes in police report, Duisburg, 10 October 1925; copy in SAM VII - 64 Bd. I.
- 149) On Strasser and the Nazi 'Left' in general see the recent study by M.H. Kele, Nazis and Workers. National Socialist Appeals to German Labor, 1919-1933, Chapel Hill, 1972, pp.81 ff..
- 150) Bezirksleitung to GL Elberfeld, Bielefeld, (no date, probably April 1926): BAK NS I/338 Bd. I.
- 151) Police report, Recklinghausen, 21 December 1925: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 4.
- 152) Report by Landrat, Beckum, 17 May 1926: SAM VII - 64 Bd. I.
- 153) The most significant recorded capture was the leader of the RFB of Erken-schwink, who joined the NSDAP in January 1928; police report, Recklinghausen, 9 January 1928: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 2.

on their being held on Saturdays since this gave local miners a chance to attend. 154) The emphasis on winning over the worker was not confined to Westphalia in the mid-twenties; it was part of the general policy of the NSDAP. A report on the general development of the party, drawn up in 1927, noted the special effort to win over Communists attending Nazi meetings in industrial areas and in the cities: 'They (the Nazi speakers) emphasize strongly the social-revolutionary character of their party and attempt to convince the Communist worker that his interests are better represented by them than the "international" and "verjudeten" Communists.' 155)

The 'left-wing' bias of Gau Ruhr propaganda was reinforced and fostered by the distribution in the Gau of the publications of Strasser's Kampfverlag. Though it is impossible to quantify the readership, both the bimonthly Nationalsozialistische Briefe and the weekly Der nationale Sozialist, had a considerable readership in Rhineland-Westphalia. 156) Support for these publications was assiduously encouraged at party meetings and through 'placard propaganda'. 157) The link between the Kampfverlag and Gau Ruhr was underlined by the successive editors of the Nationalsozialistische Briefe, Goebbels and Kaufmann. 158) The Strasser publications distributed in Gau Ruhr devoted considerable space to the question of 'socialism' and contained virulent attacks on the marxist parties. 159)

Nazi propaganda in Westphalia also attempted to explain the meaning of National Socialism. The most common titles of speeches during the 1925 to

154) OG Dortmund to Goebbels, Dortmund, 28 September 1925: BAK NS I/341.

155) "Runderlass", Berlin, 15 October 1927 (Section III, 4 a 'Die NSDAP Allgemeines'); copy in SAM Nr. 1707.

156) 'Der nationale Sozialist' came out in five regional editions, one of which covered the Rhein-Ruhr region. An indication of the popularity of the Strasser publications in Westphalia is given by the subscriptions of OG Lüdenschmidt: 32 Der nationale Sozialist, 8 Völkischer Beobachter, 5 Nationalsozialistische Briefe: notice of 19 February 1926 in BAK NS I/339 Bd. I.

157) Kampf-Verlag to Pressestelle des Gaues Rhein-Ruhr, Berlin, 22 June 1926: BAK NS I/340.

158) Kaufmann took over the editorship of the NS-Briefe in May 1927 - Kele, op. cit., p.105.

159) For an analysis of the Strasser press see Kele, op. cit., pp.111 ff..

1928 period were 'The Goals of National Socialism', 'The Purpose and Aims of the NSDAP', 'What does Adolf Hitler want?', and so on. Much attention was given to the Jewish issue, to economic problems and to the internal and external difficulties facing the state. The general condemnation of the Republic, the 'system', parliament and opposition parties was a standard feature of many speeches.

The main propaganda effort to 1928 was concentrated almost entirely on the urban centres of Westphalia. The only exceptions were provided by Homann in the Bielefeld area and Teipel in the Arnsberg region, who made some effort to attract the rural population to the party.¹⁶⁰⁾ The experience of the Westphalian Nazis in the 1928 Reichstag election was to lead to a re-evaluation of this 'urban tactic', and to a much greater effort in the rural areas.

The Reichstag Election of 1928.

The Reichstag election of 20 May 1928 was the first major test of the strength of National Socialism since the re-formation of the party in 1925. The material available for Gau Ruhr provides a good insight into the methods used by the party to maximise its effectiveness and electoral appeal. It also highlights the problems facing the movement after three years of re-organisation and rationalisation.

At the national level the party had been preparing itself for an election for a considerable time. Since the autumn of 1927 special attention had been paid by the Parteileitung to the Achilles heel of the party, its poor financial position.¹⁶¹⁾ The same problem exercised the mind of the Ruhr Gauleiter, who was exhorting the party branches 'to establish an election reserve fund to avoid being embarrassed by an election' at the beginning of 1928.¹⁶²⁾ The

160) During 1926 to 1928 the Nazis concentrated their propaganda effort in industrial centres even in predominantly agrarian regions; cf. Noakes, op. cit., pp.101 ff..

161) The "Rundschreiben" of 1 September 1927 by the FL warned Gaue and OG to prepare themselves financially for 'the coming election campaign': BAK Sammlung Schumacher 373.

162) The repeated warnings are noted in "Rundschreiben Nr. 76" (section 5), Elberfeld, 24 April 1928: HA 5/136.

reason for the continued warnings was that the Gauleitung itself lacked funds, which meant that in the event of an election branches could not call on it to finance local efforts. In its instructions to the branches throughout the election campaign the Gau headquarters made it absolutely clear that they had to depend entirely on their own resources, and that no help could be expected from the Parteileitung or Gauleitung. No credit for election material, such as posters, pamphlets etc., was to be extended to any branch. Branches were only to receive material if this had been paid for beforehand. ¹⁶³⁾ Those branches still in arrears with their payment of membership dues were also to be penalised by not receiving either speakers or election materials unless the dues were met. ¹⁶⁴⁾ To assist the election efforts of poorer branches the Gauleitung urged the use of texts taken from the VB. These could be reproduced cheaply. ¹⁶⁵⁾ The branches were also provided with pamphlets which could be bought at special rates for use in the house to house canvassing during the campaign. ¹⁶⁶⁾

In view both of the attitude of the Gauleitung about extending credit to branches and of the weak financial position of the latter, the response to the opportunity of purchasing the publications offered by the Gau propaganda centre led Kaufmann to despair. His disappointment was intensified by the lack of interest shown by the branches in the purchase of even the cheapest propaganda material, such as placards and posters. With the election but twelve days away only half a dozen of the branches of Gau Ruhr had availed themselves of the material on offer. Even the larger branches, such as those of Bochum, Hattingen, Buer, Gelsenkirchen, Essen and Krefeld, had not ordered any placards. ¹⁶⁷⁾

163) "Rundschreiben Nr. 76", (section 5 "Wahlkampf"), Elberfeld, 24 April 1928: HA 5/136.

164) Ibid., (section 1).

165) "Rundschreiben Nr. 77", (section 3,c), Elberfeld, 7 May 1928: HA 5/136.

166) The GL advised the use of Goebbels' 'Das kleine ABC', Jung's 'Nationaler oder internationaler Sozialismus', and past numbers of the National-sozialistische Briefe. The latter normally cost 40 Pfgs. each, but were available at 8 Marks per 150 - "Rundschreiben Nr. 76", (section 5), Elberfeld, 24 April 1928: HA 5/136.

167) "Nachtrag zu Rundschreiben Nr. 77", Elberfeld, 8 May 1928: HA 5/136.

Another fundamental problem which limited the effectiveness of the Nazi campaign in Westphalia was the paucity of speaking talent. This was lamented by Kaufmann, who 'noted to his regret how few new speakers had emerged in the Gau in the recent period'. 168) The small number of 'external speakers' available to the Gau had already been allotted a month before polling day. These were used primarily in meetings organised in the larger towns. Of the Gau speakers only Florian and Bolwin were still available at the beginning of May. As a consequence most branches were restricted to local resources. It was an 'absolute duty' for every district and branch leader to speak at Nazi meetings and appear at other party meetings in order to intervene in the 'discussions' which usually ended them. The ploy of appearing at other party meetings was widely used, especially in districts where the Nazis did not, usually for financial reasons, hold public meetings of their own. 169) This tactic provided the Nazis with a cheap means of propaganda. It also gave them the chance to find out the attitude of other parties on various issues, which were reported back to the Gauleitung and used in counter-propaganda. 170)

To compensate for the deficiencies which hampered the party, Kaufmann relied on excellent organisation and unflagging effort 'so that the German people can see ... that the NSDAP is not dead, but has more life than ever before'. The 'feverish activity' which the branches were exhorted to develop was to distinguish it sharply from 'the indolent bourgeois parties'. 171) To ensure an efficient conduct of business a special electoral organisation was set up for Gau Ruhr under the control of Koch, who dealt with all enquiries and problems relating to the campaign. On the local level power lay in the

168) For the following see "Rundschreiben Nr. 76", (section 2 "Wahlkampf-mittel"), Elberfeld, 24 April 1928, and "Rundschreiben Nr. 77", (section 3,c), Elberfeld, 8 May 1928: HA 5/136.

169) The Nazis in Bielefeld, who restricted their chief effort to Bielefeld itself, sent all party members 'die halbwegs reden konnten' as 'discussion' speakers to meetings held by rival parties in County Bielefeld. Singled out for special attention were meetings of the DNVP and the Wirtschaftspartei - Hiemisch, op. cit., pp.42-43.

170) "Rundschreiben Nr. 77", (section 3,f), Elberfeld, 8 May 1928: HA 5/136.

171) Ibid..

hands of the branch leaders, who were reminded of their responsibility to the Reichsleitung for carrying out their duties. 172) Although the division of responsibility gave the branch leader some independence of action, the Gauleitung attempted to direct the tactical pattern of the campaign. The instructions given to the district and branch leaders were designed to unify the propaganda effort. The strategy to be adopted by the sub-Gau units, as suggested by Gau headquarters, involved specific actions in two distinct phases. 173) In phase one, the month before polling day, the major emphasis was to be placed on intensive house to house canvassing, the primary purpose of which was to distribute pamphlets. According to the Gauleitung the ideal time to distribute the bulk of the party's literature was a fortnight before the election. This would assure that some of it would be read. In the view of Gau headquarters there was no point in a mass distribution of pamphlets close to election day, since by that time the voter was bombarded with material from all the other parties, most of which was simply thrown away without being read. In the last two weeks before polling it 'was the duty of every district and branch leader to work over in a systematic and planned fashion all those parts of their area in which the party has neither organisation nor people active on its behalf'. Two further considerations were also to be borne in mind during phase one. Firstly, and exceptionally, the Gauleitung urged 'that conflicts with other parties must be avoided at all costs during the period'. Here the calculation was probably that too radical a campaign might frighten off voters or lead to adverse publicity. Secondly, every effort was to be made to drive home to all voters that 'List 10' stood for 'NSDAP'. Branches were to fashion a stamp which was to be used to mark all party literature with 'No. 10'.

Phase two, the last few days before the election, was to be characterised by 'the total mobilisation of all the human and material resources of the

172) "Rundschreiben Nr. 76", (section "Wahlkampforganisation"), Elberfeld, 24 April 1928: HA 5/136.

173) For the following see "Rundschreiben Nr. 76", (section 5), Elberfeld, 24 April 1928; "Rundschreiben Nr. 77", (section 3,a to e), Elberfeld, 8 May 1928: HA 5/136.

party'. ¹⁷⁴⁾ This was the period in which the party branches were urged to paste up their placards and picture posters. The ideal time to do this, 'in the light of experience', was on the eve of the poll, 'since the opposition parties use the last hours to stick up their placards and remove those of the opposition'. Further, the Gauleitung instructed that 'it is the first priority and task of the SA to ensure that our placards survive undamaged until voting day'. 'Street propaganda' was also to be employed in the last three days before the election, this being the 'only period when it has a purpose and effect'. The best propaganda weapons were lorries, festooned with party stickers and placards, touring extensively in the towns and districts. The presence of 'party comrades at election centres with National Socialist placards' was also recommended.

The various instructions from the Gauleitung show that it possessed a degree of propaganda skill which had been previously absent. The plan of campaign covered most eventualities and was designed to utilise available techniques and resources to the full. The extent to which the carefully thought-out guidelines influenced the propaganda campaign of individual branches is more difficult to gauge. The larger branches alone had the resources to make use of the proffered advice. In Bielefeld, for example, the whole electoral campaign was severely restricted by lack of cash, and speakers, and by the fact that there were too few party members to carry out all the basic propaganda. The branch even lacked the money to purchase sufficient posters, and it resorted to daubing slogans on houses and public buildings. ¹⁷⁵⁾ In the town of Soest the party was not able to manage even one public meeting, and restricted itself to distributing pamphlets and to placard propaganda. ¹⁷⁶⁾ In the urban centres of the inner Ruhr the Nazis were unable to avoid the attention of political

174) For the following see "Rundschreiben Nr. 76", (sections 4 and 7), Elberfeld, 24 April 1928; "Rundschreiben Nr. 77", (section 3, c and f), Elberfeld, 8 May 1928: HA 5/136.

175) On the election campaign in Bielefeld see Hiemisch, op. cit., pp.41 ff..

176) Beck, op. cit., p.360.

opponents and were involved in heavy street clashes with Communists and Socialists. 177) The Cauleitung's theory of how the campaign should be conducted, and the way in which it was actually carried out, were not necessarily the same.

For the NSDAP the outcome of the election was a disappointment. In Westphalia-North the party polled a mere 1.0 per cent, which was a fractional decline compared to the 1.3 per cent secured in December 1924. 178) In Westphalia-South the return of 1.6 per cent was a marginal increase compared with the 1.1 per cent polled in December 1924. Both Westphalian results were well below the national average of 2.6 per cent. Neither the regional nor the national poll gave much comfort to the Nazi hierarchy. Considering the effort made by the party nationally, the 840,000 votes cast for the NSDAP were not an impressive total. 179) The only satisfaction the party could have had was the knowledge that these votes were for the NSDAP and not for the völkisch amalgam of which the party had been but one segment in 1924. The party leadership did its best to gloss over the disappointment. A commentary in the VB stated that 'for a revolutionary movement the number of votes cast is not the important factor, but the type of persons who have supported it. And we can assert without qualms: 840,000 votes and 840,000 fighters.' 180) But such an attitude failed to hide the disappointment felt by the party leaders. 181) The only trend which encouraged them was the performance of the NSDAP in rural areas, which bore little relationship to its major organisational

177) Beck, op. cit., p.244.

178) Election results taken from Milatz, op. cit., p.112.

179) An idea of the vigour with which the party had wooed the electorate is reflected in an article in the VB, 30 June 1928, in which it was stated that 118 speakers had held 10,000 meetings in the three months prior to the election. 26 of these had each spoken in 50 to 80 meetings alone according to the article. (These figures do not add up since each speaker on average would have had to hold 86.5 speeches each). Cf. "Runderlass", Berlin, 20 July 1928 - copy in SAM Nr. 1703; also report on the NSDAP, Berlin, 13 July 1928 - copy in HA 69/1509.

180) VB, 31 May 1928.

181) Cf. the report on the NSDAP, Berlin, 13 July 1928; HA 69/1509.

and propaganda efforts. In several predominantly agrarian electoral areas the party achieved considerable success. The NSDAP averaged over 10 per cent of the vote in the rural counties of East Friesland and northern Oldenburg in the electoral district of Weser-Ems, with exceptionally high returns being recorded in County Wittmund (36 per cent) and County Ammerland (28 per cent).¹⁸²⁾ Rural support for the party also resulted in returns of 18.1 per cent and 17.7 per cent in the Schleswig-Holstein counties of Norderdithmarschen and Süderdithmarschen respectively.¹⁸³⁾ In Bavaria, where the party performed slightly better in urban than in rural areas, encouraging results were also obtained, especially in Upper Franconia.¹⁸⁴⁾ The rural successes impressed themselves on the Parteileitung, which came to the conclusion that 'the election results in the rural areas show that with less expenditure, of effort, money and time greater successes can be achieved there than in the cities. National Socialist meetings with good speakers in small towns and villages are events and form the topic of daily conversation for weeks afterwards, while in the cities meetings even with 3,000 to 4,000 people quickly sink into insignificance.'¹⁸⁵⁾

In the urban-orientated Gau Ruhr similar conclusions were reached by the Gauleitung.¹⁸⁶⁾ In Kaufmann's analysis of the party's performance, the urban results secured by the Nazis was deemed 'satisfactory'. The results achieved in the rural areas struck him as 'astonishing' and he considered that the rural districts had considerable possibilities: 'In those rural areas in which active party comrades were operating we have secured surprisingly large successes. I name the districts of Arnshagen and Siegerland ... The votes secured

182) Noakes, op. cit., p.121.

183) R. Heberle, Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein, 1918 bis 1932, Stuttgart, 1963, p.42. The Prussian Landtag results were equally high - Stoltenberg, op. cit., p.145.

184) Fridham, op. cit., p.83.

185) VB, 31 May 1928.

186) For the following see "Rundschreiben Nr. 79", ("Lehren aus dem Wahlkampf"), Elberfeld, 6 June 1928: HA 5/136.

bear no relation to party strength in terms of membership numbers.' 187) The reason for these rural successes according to Kaufmann was 'the absence of counter-agitation' and the poor organisation of the other parties. The conclusion reached by him was the logical one of 'following up the success. In those districts where great strides in our voting strength were made the follow-up should see the creation of party branches in areas of high votes, if no branch existed already, or at least the establishment of a party cell.' The need 'for a further improvement of the town organisations' was also noted in the report.

The implementation of these plans was not to be realised under Kaufmann. In the summer months of 1928 internal regional disputes were to necessitate a fundamental re-organisation of the Rhenish-Westphalian NSDAP. This was initiated by the removal of Kaufmann and the dissolution of the mammoth Gau Ruhr.

187) The rural vote was not all that impressive, though in the Arnsberg district there were a few very good returns. In County Iserlohn, for example, the NSDAP obtained 21.2 per cent and 17.6 per cent of the vote in the villages of Kalthof and Evingsen respectively - Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 21 May 1928.

Chapter 8. TOWARDS A MASS PARTY, 1928 TO 1930.

Gau Westphalia under Josef Wagner.

The 1928 Reichstag election was followed by a period of crisis in Gau Ruhr which threatened to destroy the regional movement. A serious intra-party dispute in the summer of 1928 jeopardized the unity of the party, weakened the position of Gauleiter Kaufmann, and restricted the effectiveness of the Gauleitung. This occurred at a time during which the party was faced with severe financial difficulties accentuated by the election campaign. In the run-up to the election the party branches had concentrated their resources on meeting the cost of the campaign with the result that an increasing number failed to remit their membership dues to the Gauleitung, which seriously worsened the latter's financial position. Whereas in the pre-election period only six branches were in arrears, the number of branches failing to meet their obligations accelerated rapidly in the post-May period. ¹⁾ By May branches owing contributions numbered fifteen, a figure which rose to twenty-seven by June. An added problem for the Gauleitung was the fact that fifteen branches failed to pay for election material supplied by the Gau during the campaign. ²⁾ To add to the difficulties of the Gauleitung, Kaufmann and the district leader of Essen, Terboven, chose this rather inappropriate time to launch the first Gau paper, Die Neue Front. This was to 'be used to fight the assertions of the hostile local press' and provide the party with a further propaganda instrument, the lack of which had been a serious disadvantage in the recent election campaign. ³⁾

Kaufmann found it increasingly difficult to exert his will within the Gau. Though he sent continuous reminders to the branches to pay their arrears

- 1) "Rundschreiben Nr. 76", 24 April 1928: HA 5/136. Two of the six branches, Salzuflen and Haltern, still owed their dues from December 1927 and January 1928 respectively.
- 2) "Rundschreiben Nr. 77", 7 May 1928, and "Rundschreiben Nr. 79", 6 June 1928: HA 5/136.
- 3) "Presserundschreiben", NSDAP Gau Ruhr, 6 June 1928: HA 5/136.

and circulars in which he emphasized the Gauleitung's weak financial position and its imminent bankruptcy, the bulk of the offending branches did not even bother to reply to his demands. ⁴⁾ To make matters worse, the Parteileitung was pressing the Gauleitung to fulfil its responsibilities vis-à-vis Munich. Kaufmann's authority, already in question, was further undermined by a personal feud with Koch, which added to the disruption of the party's organisation in the summer of 1928. ⁶⁾ This struggle cost Kaufmann much personal prestige and the Gauleiter's activities were virtually suspended as he fought to clear his name. The Parteileitung had to intervene. In July Kaufmann was forced to take a 'vacation' and the de facto leadership of the Gau passed into the hands of the district leader of Bochum, Josef Wagner. ⁷⁾

The events of the summer, culminating in the removal of Kaufmann, occasioned a fundamental re-organisation of Gau Ruhr. The re-organisation was undertaken in the light of Hitler's decision that in future the Gaue were to correspond to the Reichstag electoral districts, from which they were to take their name, a decision motivated by the desire to facilitate the propaganda efforts of the movement. ⁸⁾ For Gau Ruhr this involved several divisions and adjustments: the creation of two independent districts, Bergisch-Land/Niederrhein (which covered the electoral district of Düsseldorf-Ost) and Essen (which covered the electoral district of Düsseldorf-West), and the re-creation of the former Gau Westphalia (which covered the electoral districts of Westphalia-North and -South). The new Gau Westphalia lost two regions previously attached to it, namely the Regierungsbezirk Osnabrück, which was ceded to the newly formed Gau Weser-Ems, and the small Land of Schaumburg-Lippe, which went to Gau Hanover-South-Brunswick. ⁹⁾ The division of Gau Westphalia

4) "Rundschreiben Nr. 79", 6 June 1928: HA 5/136.

5) Ibid..

6) On this see chapter 7, pp. 249 ff.; also Hüttenberger, op. cit., p.48.

7) Tyrell, op. cit., p.376. It was Wagner's signature which appeared on the Gau Rundschreiben from August 1928 - see "An alle OG Gau Ruhr", 10 August 1928: HA 5/136.

8) Orlow, op. cit., pp.139 ff.; also Strasser to Wagner, Munich, 23 July 1928: BAK NS 22/1076.

9) Schaumburg-Lippe ultimately became part of Gau Westphalia-North in January 1931.

into the two electoral districts which it covered had to wait until January 1931, by which time the membership of the NSDAP in northern Westphalia was sufficient to make two independent Gaue a viable proposition.

Gau Westphalia was officially taken over by Josef Wagner on 1 October 1928. ¹⁰⁾ He immediately set about ending the organisational laxity which had characterised Gau Ruhr in the last months of its existence. Wagner's first, and subsequent, circulars to the branches left no doubt about the style of leadership to which the Gau was to be subjected. The instructions were peremptory in tone, and they left no room for argument. ¹¹⁾ Having been 'given the task of re-organising the Gau by Adolf Hitler', he intended to create a 'closed front through fighting unity'. This was 'to be achieved within fourteen days'. In this allotted time-span the branch leaders had to activate their membership and fulfil their duties to the Gau and Reichsleitung. A mixture of threat and appeal to the pride and 'conscience' of the branch leaders was to effect this transformation: 'Branch leaders and branches not doing their duty ... cannot expect the right to voice their opinions. The instructions of the Gauleitung must be obeyed without fail. The relationship between branch and Gau is dependent on them doing their duty. I expect that the branch leaders have enough pride to realise what they have to do.'

Wagner was just the type of ruthless individual ideal for organising the Westphalian National Socialists. His long experience as district leader of Bochum, which contained the bulk of Gau Westphalia's branches and members in the 'twenties, had enabled him to develop his own principles of leadership. During the period 1925 to 1928 he had been a most active speaker for the party, which brought him into contact not only with party officials throughout the Gau,

- 9) Schaumburg-Lippe ultimately became part of Gau Westphalia-North in January 1931.
- 10) Wagner had taken charge, on a provisional basis, of Gau Ruhr in July 1928 following an interview with Hitler on 21 July. His appointment to head Gau Westphalia was effective from October - see "Parteigenossen Gau Ruhr", Bochum, 8 November 1928: HA 5/136.
- 11) For the following see Wagner's circular "Parteigenossen Gau Ruhr", Bochum, 8 November 1928: HA 5/136.

but also with many of the rank and file members. ¹²⁾ His election to the Reichstag in 1928 was a further advantage. ¹³⁾ It furnished him with the freedom to roam the Gau in pursuit of party duties at the tax-payer's expense. ¹⁴⁾ His mobility, and the financial security and privileges attached to his position as a member of parliament, all helped Wagner to fulfil his Gauleiter role.

The major problem facing the Gau was the perennial one: the lack of funds at all levels of the regional organisation. The desperate position of the Gauleitung can be gauged from its circular to the branches in August 1928, in which its own bad financial position and urgent need for cash were strongly emphasized. ¹⁵⁾ To sort out this and other problems Wagner ordered the whole of the party hierarchy, from the branch level upwards, to appear at a Gau-führertagung in Dortmund in September. Those branches which failed to send representatives were declared to be 'non-existent and will be dissolved'. ¹⁶⁾ That this was no idle threat can be seen in the instant removal of the district leader of Lippe-Detmold, Carl Herdejost, who failed to turn up at the meeting. Herdejost's excuse, namely that the NSDAP of the Lippe-Detmold area was engaged in a propaganda drive on the day of the Dortmund meeting, was dismissed by Wagner since 'orders of the Gau take precedence over those of the district'. ¹⁷⁾ Wagner was determined to remove Herdejost because he considered him to be the most ineffective district leader in the Gau. Also perhaps he wanted to issue a warning to others to run their districts more efficiently. In his correspondence with the Parteileitung Wagner declared that Herdejost was 'absolutely incapable' as his district had lost eighty per cent of its membership and

- 12) Wagner was a very popular speaker in the Gau and much in demand. On his speaking ability see the exaggerated eulogy in Beck: "Im Gau Westfalen-Süd gab es keinen, der stilistisch und inhaltlich das Format der Reden des Gauleiters Wagner erreichen konnte. Seine Reden waren künstlerische Manifestationen eines staatsphilosophischen Geistes, die mit allen Mitteln ursprünglicher Rhetorik ausgestattet waren." Beck, op. cit., p.81.
- 13) He was elected via the Reichsliste, the 'hospital list' in Weimar parlance.
- 14) On the advantages to the party of the MdR see Fridham, op. cit., pp.79 ff..
- 15) "An alle Ortsgruppen", Elberfeld, 18 August 1928: HA 5/136.
- 16) "Rundschreiben", Elberfeld, 11 September 1928: HA 5/136.
- 17) Wagner to Herdejost, Bochum, 17 September 1928: BAK NS 22/1076.

was the only region in Westphalia in which nearly fifty per cent of the 1924 poll was lost in the May Reichstag election. 18) Herdejost, although he accepted his removal, defended himself against Wagner's accusations by pointing out that he had sent a representative to the Dortmund meeting, and by rejecting Wagner's statistics concerning the decline of the party in Lippe-Detmold. 19) Herdejost also sought support against Wagner, and a reversal of the decision to remove him, from the Parteileitung and from von Pfeffer who had appointed him in 1924. 20) A section of the largest branch in his district, that of Detmold, similarly appealed on Herdejost's behalf and asked for pressure to be applied by the Parteileitung to force 'the reversal of Wagner's order'. 21)

All these efforts came to nothing. Despite Herdejost's long service he was powerless in face of Wagner's insistence on his removal. The case clearly demonstrates the power of the Gauleiter by 1928. Wagner's emphasis on his authority in his Gau, which can be seen in his correspondence, and his determination to organise his region as he saw fit underlines the fact that effective power could be rapidly secured by an authoritarian Gauleiter. It was all a question of attitude. If one compares Wagner's experience with Herdejost and Kaufmann's attempts to remove Terboven (who was admittedly, more powerful, and had evidence proving Kaufmann's misdemeanour), the difference is striking. Wagner imposed his dictatorial rule and enforced his will from the start. In his first year he not only ruled Gau Westphalia with a firm hand, but, seemingly heady with power, had the nerve to attempt to give orders to Gregor Strasser. His 'instructions' to Strasser were occasioned by Wagner's failure to attract the 'big names' to the first Gau party rally to be held under him in April 1929. Preparations for this event had been set in motion at the beginning

18) Wagner to Strasser/Organisationsabteilung der NSDAP, Bochum, 18 October 1928: BAK NS 22/1076.

19) Herdejost to Wagner, Detmold, 17 September and 22 September 1928: BAK NS 22/1076.

20) Herdejost to RL, Detmold, 25 September 1928; Herdejost to von Pfeffer, Detmold, 25 September 1928: BAK NS 22/1076.

21) "An die Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Herrn A. Hitler", OG Detmold (11 signatures), Detmold, 22 September 1928: BAK NS 22/1076.

of the year. The invitation to Strasser had been sent out in January, and had been accepted. 22) Strasser subsequently cancelled his proposed visit in order to prepare the election campaign in Saxony in mid-May. Wagner was extremely annoyed and gave vent to his anger: 'Your rather late cancellation of your proposed visit to our Gau rally has reached and astonished me ... The idea that the Saxon election of mid-May prevents your presence at our Bochum conference ... must be totally rejected. As you may see from the programme already sent to you, your non-participation is absolutely impossible, especially since refusals have already reached us from party comrades von Epp and Stöhr ... In any case, I am of the opinion that you, in your capacity as national party organiser, must be present at large rallies in any Gau. I ask therefore for a telegraphic reply to let us know when you will reach Bochum on Saturday 13 April.' 23)

Wagner's failure to appreciate that the Führerprinzip, which he used so effectively in his dealings with sub-Gau organisations, could also affect him when he was dealing with the Parteileitung, was emphasized in Strasser's reply. Strasser pointed out that his actions were determined by the authority of the Führer, who had ordered his participation in the Saxon election. Strasser also made it clear that his actions as party organiser were determined by the needs of the Parteileitung, and not by those of any particular Gau. The 'abrupt and intolerable viewpoint' expressed in Wagner's letter was an affront to his authority. He rejected the 'impertinent formulation of the letter on disciplinary grounds'. 24) Wagner's collision with Strasser taught him a lot about the manner with which he had to deal with the central party authorities. He did not repeat his mistake. Although he retained his authoritarian, assertive tone in his Gau instructions, his correspondence with the Parteileitung was

22) Wagner to G. Strasser, Bochum, 18 January 1929; Strasser to GL Westphalia, 28 January 1929: BAK NS 22/1076.

23) Wagner to G. Strasser, Bochum, 7 April 1929: BAK NS 22/1076.

24) Strasser to Wagner, Munich, 15 April 1929: BAK NS 22/1076.

framed in the light of his experience. When Wagner deemed that Strasser's presence 'was urgently necessary' at a Gau conference in January 1931, his appeal was couched in more respectful language: 'would you please appear at the meeting if possible'. 25) By that time the two had established a friendly relationship, and the initial clash was a matter of history. The harmonious relationship between Wagner and Strasser is demonstrated by the warm letter of thanks by Strasser to Wagner in December 1930, in which he emphasized his pleasure at the 'smooth co-operation' established between himself, in his capacity as party organiser, and Wagner as Gauleiter. 26)

Between 1928 and 1930 Wagner had transformed the NSDAP in Gau Westphalia from a minority splinter group into a party which stood in the forefront of affairs. The dramatic change in the party's position was in step with the national development of the party in this period. The various means of measuring the party's progress, such as increase in membership, electoral support, organisational strength, all indicate growth and expansion. Part of the explanation for the rapid rise of the movement is related to the nature and activism of the party. Part of the answer lies in environmental factors: the combination of an acute economic and political crisis which faced Germany from 1929 onwards. Nothing assisted the party more than the collapse of the economy. It was the fear of an economic crisis from 1929 onwards, especially among the middle class, which drove people towards the Nazi movement. 27) It was the reality of the crisis which stimulated membership and electoral support from 1930 onwards. The NSDAP, with its aggressive, opportunist leadership at the national, regional and local levels, backed up by an efficient propaganda machine, flourished in the gloom.

The most obvious sign of economic difficulties was the rapid increase in the number of unemployed from 1928 onwards. In Westphalia the number of

25) Wagner to Strasser, Bochum, 22 December 1930: BAK NS 22/1076.

26) Strasser to Wagner, Munich, 24 December 1930: *ibid.*.

27) Cf. the example of Northheim, in W.S. Allen, The Nazi Seizure of Power. The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-1935, London, 1966, p.24.

recipients of unemployment pay more than doubled between 1929 and 1930. 28) Hardest hit was the heavy industrial zone of the inner Ruhr, where the number of unemployed increased from 14.9 per 1,000 population in 1929 to 40.5 per 1,000 by 1930. In the iron and metal-working regions of the Sauerland and Siegerland a similar deterioration occurred, with unemployment running on average at 16.7 per 1,000 in 1929 and 36.6 per 1,000 in 1930. The growth of unemployment placed great strains on the financial resources of the towns. The demands on them caused by ever expanding unemployment and welfare payments resulted in deficit budgeting in a number of towns throughout the province. The difference between income and expenditure rose sharply as the crisis deepened:

	1928/29	Deficit (in RM) 1929/30	1930/31	
Dortmund	9,500,000	4,456,000	17,843,500	
Münster	560,000			
Hagen		7,600,000		
Bielefeld		1,000,000		
Bochum		1,500,000	7,977,600	
Gelsenkirchen		3,617,500	6,153,400	
Herne		1,145,766	3,703,856	
Witten		800,000	1,963,370	29)

One immediate consequence of the financial crisis was a curtailment of expenditure on public projects, which further exacerbated the employment situation. Public works were postponed as more income was diverted towards ameliorating the plight of the unemployed. The example of Bochum suffices to illustrate the difficulties facing the authorities:

	Expenditure	Income	Welfare Expenditure	
1930/31	51,050,000	50,263,400	11,640,400	
1931/32	56,073,950	48,096,350	19,619,700	30)

The economic recession which hit the province in 1929 was characterised by the reduction in the use of the productive capacity of industry and the

28) For the following see the reports by the Landesarbeitsamt of Westphalia for 1929, 1930 and 1931 in WWA K2/410.

29) "Entwicklung der Finanzwirtschaft verschiedener Städte", Bochum IHK, 30 April 1931: WWA K2/743.

30) "Etat Bochum", n.d., copy in WWA K2/743.

increase in plant closure due to lack of demand or bankruptcy. The lack of capital, the high credit rates, and the uncompetitive position of German industry in the contracting export market, sapped the vitality of industry. The major concern of industrialists was to survive by restricting costs to the bare minimum. ³¹⁾ By 1930 Westphalian industry was contracting on all fronts.

The chief sufferer was the iron and steel industry. In the Dortmund region alone the decline of output in this industrial sector fell by 36.8 per cent in the first year of the depression. ³²⁾ Hagen, heavily dependent on the iron and steel industry, was particularly hard-hit. Between 1930 and 1932 12 metal processing plants went bankrupt, 3 further iron and steel works were closed, and 9 others were reduced to work at low capacity. The consequence was a rapid rise in unemployment, which reached 31 per cent by 1932, of which about half consisted of metal-workers. ³³⁾ Other branches of industry show similar patterns of development. The textile industry of the Münsterland was working at 80 per cent of its capacity by the end of 1929. ³⁴⁾ The important brewing industry of central Westphalia cut back output by 20 per cent between July 1929 and July 1930 owing to a decline in demand occasioned by 'the bad economic position and the decline in the purchasing power of the population, which has cut consumption by 30 per cent'. ³⁵⁾

Hard hit from the very beginning of the crisis was the retail trade, the

- ³¹⁾ The dilemma facing industry brought out in a report, typical of many of the period, by the Lohmann and Stolterfoht AG in 1930. In it the developments during the financial year 1929/30 are summarised as 'cheerless'. A former export trade of 40 per cent had sunk to zero by 1930; the plant was only able to keep going by cutting prices to cover the bare production costs and operating at a slight loss; productive capacity was cut by 30 per cent due to declining demand - report by Maschinenfabrik Lohmann and Stolterfoht AG, Witten, to IHK Bochum, 24 September 1930: WWA K2/49; see also report on iron and steel industry, IHK Dortmund, 26 February 1930: WWA K2/284.
- ³²⁾ Report by IHK Dortmund for September 1930: WWA K2/284.
- ³³⁾ Hildenbrand, op. cit., pp.29-30.
- ³⁴⁾ "Monatliche Wirtschaftsberichte der Mitgliedsammern und Zweckverbandes der IHKn Bochum, Dortmund, Essen und Münster", 29 January 1930: WWA K2/284.
- ³⁵⁾ Report by IHK Dortmund, July 1930: WWA K2/284. Further report by Verband Rheinland-Westfalen Brauereien, Dortmund, 28 July 1930: WWA K2/49.

position of which rapidly approached 'catastrophe'. By January 1930 many medium-sized and small shops were in a 'crisis situation'. After years of constant expansion since the inflation of 1923, 1929 proved a year of regression for all retailers, including the larger chain-stores.³⁶⁾ In the course of 1930 the situation of the retail trade deteriorated month by month. The decline of the purchasing power of the population as unemployment and short-time working increased, and the generally uncertain economic situation led to constant contraction of turn-over. By the end of 1930 only the barest necessities were being purchased by the consumers. Some branches were especially hard-hit, such as the shoe trade, and the textile trade in general, 'which really sold only cheap goods'. Durable goods, such as household implements, were rarely bought as reduced incomes were used in the purchase of foodstuffs.³⁷⁾ Inevitably in this situation numerous businesses collapsed while efforts to promote consumption and turn-over, such as special sales, reached ludicrous proportions.³⁸⁾ Increased too, was the demand for credit, especially in the groceries. This embarrassed shopkeepers who felt obliged to extend credit, which faced them in turn with a rising volume of debt to the wholesalers.³⁹⁾ The net result of the situation was a decline in retail turn-over of between 20 and 30 per cent in September 1930 in comparison with September 1929.⁴⁰⁾

The worsening economic situation triggered off fears and resentments which were exploited and encouraged by the propaganda of the radical Left and Right. The most constant theme at Nazi meetings was the existing misery and the threatening economic situation. An anticipated bankruptcy of the German state was prophesied with great enthusiasm by the Nazi speakers in a number

36) "Allgemeiner Bericht über die wirtschaftliche und wirtschaftspolitische Lage des Einzelhandels", Bochum IHK, 17 January 1930: WWA K2/49.

37) Reports on the retail trade by the IHK Bochum, 25 February, 29 March, 28 May, 27 June, 28 August and 27 September 1930: WWA K2/284. On the effects of the depression on the retail trade in general see the study by H.A. Winkler, op. cit., pp.33-34.

38) See especially the report by the IHK Bochum, 28 August 1930: WWA K2/284.

39) Reports on retail trade by IHK Bochum, 27 June and 28 August 1930: WWA K2/284.

40) Report by IHK Bochum, 27 September 1930: WWA K2/284.

of meetings throughout Westphalia, which occasionally had quite dramatic consequences. Thus a series of Nazi meetings in County Halle in February 1930, in which district leader Homann spoke on the theme 'Germany facing State Bankruptcy', led to a run on the Versmold Savings Bank.⁴¹⁾ In the uncertain economic climate of the period the Nazi prophecy of doom found many believers. The political consequence was a rapid rise in the support for the extreme political parties, the KPD and NSDAP. The Nazis derived greater advantage than the Communists. Starting from a much lower base, the rapid increase in support catapulted the NSDAP into the forefront of politics. This is not to say that the emergence to prominence of the NSDAP can be explained purely by the simple equation 'depression equals Nazi growth'. Another key factor was the ability of the party to capitalise on the unrest.⁴²⁾ The existence of an efficient party organisation, built up since 1925, the flexibility and adaptability of Nazi propaganda, and the activism of the party in general are all crucial factors which help to explain the growth of Nazism in the post-1928 period.

The available evidence makes it clear that the year 1929 represents an important turning-point in the fortunes of the Westphalian NSDAP. From the beginning of 1929 the party was able to record progress once more after a period of stagnation between 1927 and 1928. In parts of the Gau the party had experienced a considerable decline in members after the growth years of 1925 and 1926. In the Gelsenkirchen area the party fared particularly badly. Between January 1927 and December 1928 the membership of the branches situated in the Gelsenkirchen-Recklinghausen region declined by just over 42 per cent, from 735 to 418.⁴³⁾ The Münster branch lost over a quarter of its

41) Report by Landrat, Halle i/W., 18 February 1930: SAD MI IP/604.

42) "Das Anwachsen der Bewegung beruht in erster Linie auf der Unzufriedenheit der Bevölkerung, hervorgerufen durch die ungünstigen wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse. Dieser Umstand wird von der NSDAP z.Zt. mit Erfolg ausgenutzt" - from a report by the Police President, Bielefeld, 22 April 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

43) Report by police covering the Polizeibezirk of Recklinghausen, 12 January 1929: SAM VII - 2 Bl. 6.

members in one year. ⁴⁴⁾ The year 1929 was to see a reversal of the trend, with expansion being recorded on all fronts. A report on the Dortmund district, an area in which 'the terror of the KPD made propaganda very difficult', noted the 'tremendous surge' towards the party in 1929. Constant house to house canvassing and continuous agitation at public meetings and demonstrations resulted in the formation of several new branches and membership increases in existing branches ranging from 150 to 400 per cent. ⁴⁵⁾ Such success spurred the rank and file to pursue their party's cause still more vociferously.

The Nazi appeal produced a response from those sections of society made vulnerable by the economic difficulties of the period. The party made further inroads into the ranks of the working class, which already provided it with much support in the Ruhr towns. ⁴⁶⁾ The unemployed in general, but especially unemployed youths, were given special attention by the NSDAP in the big Ruhr towns. By copying the Communist tactic of intensive propaganda at the labour exchanges the Nazis secured 'significant success' in attracting working class supporters. ⁴⁷⁾ Other social groupings also responded to the party. For the first time in its history the NSDAP secured widespread support in the Protestant counties of southern and eastern Westphalia. The acute agrarian crisis, which had set in long before industry collapsed, moved even the dour Westphalian farmer to respond to the overtures of the NSDAP. ⁴⁸⁾ In the first half of 1930 another main feature of the party's development was the sizeable influx of members drawn from the middle class. ⁴⁹⁾ The growing sympathy for the

- 44) The membership of the branch declined from 87 in December 1926 to 61 by December 1927 - Orlow, op. cit., p.111.
- 45) Report on the "Bezirksvertretertagung, Bezirk Gross-Dortmund", 2 February 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. I.
- 46) Claims made in the Gau newspaper Die Neue Front contained some truth: "Das Anwachsen der Nationalsozialisten ist das Versagen der deutschen Linken, und es ist nicht zu verheimlichen, dass auch ein grosser Teil der nach Links gehörenden Schichten der Gewerbstätigen zu dem neuen Idol wie zu dem Messias emporsieht"; Die Neue Front, 9 May 1930.
- 47) Police report, Bochum, 20 October 1930; SAM VII - 1 Bd. 1.
- 48) See the report by the Regierungspräsidenten Minden, 23 August 1929; SAD MI IP/604.
- 49) See especially police report, Recklinghausen, 30 May 1930; SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

Nazis among the middle class in general was very important because it eased their financial situation. Sympathetic elements from the professional classes, factory owners, shopkeepers and civil servants, people who could not or would not join the party openly for personal or professional reasons, supported the Nazis materially through a 'neutral' front organisation founded by the party specifically to tap such 'hidden' support, called the Deutsche Freiheitsbund. The organisation did not hold public meetings, nor did its members meet or know each other. The voluntary gifts and payments made by the secret benefactors of the NSDAP were collected from time to time by the branch leaders or branch treasurers, who kept a special membership list. The only direct connection between the members of the League and the Nazi party was a special pass carried by the former. Although the organisation played an important role in the movement, to describe it as 'the financial backbone of the NSDAP', may well have been an exaggeration. 50)

The growth rate of the party in Westphalia from 1929 is impressive. In January 1930 the total enrolled membership, according to reliable police contacts inside the party, was 3,500. 51) In 1930 applications to join the NSDAP swamped the party bureaucracy. Major growth centres, such as the Bochum branch, which alone had a membership of 2,100 by July 1930, were unable to cope with the flood of applications and had to refuse new members for some time. In the case of Bochum no new members were admitted between 1 July and 1 October, by which time the backlog had been cleared. 52) Official figures published after the 'seizure of power' gave the Westphalian Gau a membership of 5,779 by 1 September 1930. 53) Within two months membership figures jumped by over

50) The 'Deutsche Freiheitsbund' is the subject of two reports by the police president of Bochum, 30 October 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1; and the police president of Bielefeld, 6 November 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

51) Report by Police President, Bochum, 9 January 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

52) Police report, Bochum, 3 October 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

53) Parteistatistik. Stand 1 Januar 1935, Herausgeber Der Reichsorganisationsleiter der NSDAP, Band 1, p.26. A contemporary police report based on 'reliable information' estimated the party membership on 1 September 1930 at 11,500 - police report, Bochum, 3 October 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

500 per cent. According to Gau statistics, by 31 October 1930 Westphalia had a total enrolled membership of 32,186. ⁵⁴⁾ The breakthrough by the NSDAP in the September Reichstag election undoubtedly improved the fortunes of the party, producing a bandwagon effect. A section of the newly enrolled members, called 'Septemberlinge' by the 'old' Nazis, were probably Konjunkturritter, attracted by what was now a successful and powerful movement. By the time the Gau was divided into Gaue Westphalia-North and -South in January 1931 the membership was estimated to be 36,500. ⁵⁵⁾

The Westphalian NSDAP had a strong working class base. To describe the movement as the 'Salvation Army of the Lumpenproletariat and Lumpenbourgeoisie' by 1930 was neither accurate nor adequate. ⁵⁶⁾ The southern section of the Gau, Gau Westphalia-South as it became in January 1931, had the highest percentage of blue-collar workers in proportion to the total Gau membership of all the 32 Gaue into which the NSDAP was divided by September 1930. ⁵⁷⁾ A statistical breakdown for September 1930 gives the following:

Occupation group	Society	NSDAP	Westph.-N.	Westph.-S.	
Workers	45.9	28.1	32.4	35.3	
White-collar workers	12.0	25.6	28.1	29.6	
Self-employed	9.0	20.7	19.6	19.3	
Civil servants	5.1	8.3	5.7	5.9	
Farmers	10.6	14.0	6.1	2.4	
Others	17.4	3.3	8.1	7.5	58)

The data provided by Wagner to the Parteileitung concerning the composition of the NSDAP in the 'inner industrial area of Westphalia', which excluded

54) "An die RL der NSDAP - Organisationsabteilung", NSDAP Gau Westfalen, 7 November 1930 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. This figure probably included a large percentage of supporters who were not contributing regular membership dues.

55) Police report, Bochum, 21 January 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 2. This estimate is too high; at its formation Gau Westphalia-North had a membership of only 4,256: "Statistik Gau W.-N." 1.6.1931: copy in SAD MI IP/607. Gau Westphalia-South had a total membership of 24,214 by January 1933: Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.26.

56) Thus the KPD's Münster paper Volkswille, 18 July 1930.

57) Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.138.

58) Compiled from statistics given by Schäfer, op. cit., p.17 and from Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.146.

the agrarian regions of the Münsterland, Sauerland, and eastern Westphalia, emphasize the working class basis of the party. According to Wagner's figures, 57.7 per cent of the party was made up of 'workers', of whom 26.2 per cent were miners, while what Wagner called 'Mittelständler' accounted for only 19.5 per cent. The other categories listed were 'civil servants and employees', which totalled 18.1 per cent (sub-divided into 5.7 per cent 'lower', 3.1 per cent 'middle', and 9.3 per cent 'higher'), 2.0 per cent 'Freie Berufe', and 'Others', numbering 1.4 per cent. 59) The high percentage of 'workers' belonging to the party in the Ruhr industrial belt, double the NSDAP's national average, reflected the fact that 75 to 80 per cent of the population of the industrial region consisted of 'workers'. 60) Thus the party in the area had to be working class based, and despite the high percentage of working class support, workers were still under-represented given the circumstances prevalent in the Ruhr. The percentage of 'Mittelständler' was, on the other hand, extremely high given the comparatively weak middle class in the industrial belt.

The rapid and enormous increase in party membership necessitated and resulted in a significant expansion of the network of party branches in the Gau. From 1929 onwards the Nazis were able to penetrate the province in a much more systematic fashion and establish a series of new branches in areas previously hardly affected by the movement. By April 1930 the Gau organisation consisted of ten districts controlling 118 branches. 61) By the time of the Reichstag election expansion had necessitated the creation of three further districts and the number of branches had increased beyond the 200 mark. 62) The major growth areas continued to be traditional strongholds of the party in the urban, industrial centres. The districts of Bochum, Dortmund, Bielefeld,

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- 59) "An die RL der NSDAP-Organisationsabteilung", NSDAP Gau Westfalen, Bochum, 7 November 1930. Copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. (Wagner 'lost' 1.3 per cent).
 60) Report by Police President, Bochum, 21 November 1930 concerning the "Rundschreiben der NSDAP Gau Westfalen 7 November 1930": SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.
 61) Police reports, Bochum, 1 and 24 April 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.
 62) Police report, Gelsenkirchen, 17 July 1930; report by Police President, Bochum, 16 September 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

Lenne-Volme and Ruhr-Ennepe headed the Gauleiter's growth charts for May and July. Significant growth also occurred in the predominantly agrarian regions of central and eastern Westphalia, including those counties in which Catholicism predominated. The Sauerland and Münsterland areas saw the creation of numerous branches and a much deeper penetration by the party. 63)

The success of the Westphalian NSDAP in engaging increasing support is measured by the statistical data noted above. The electoral breakthrough of September 1930, and the sudden surge of membership in the September and November period of 1930, emphasize the progress of the party. By the end of 1930 the overall strength of Gau Westphalia was sufficient to allow the division of the Gau into Gaue Westphalia-North and Westphalia-South, to conform with the national pattern of Gau equating with electoral district.

The SA.

In the development of the NSDAP the SA played a crucial role. Its importance rested on the function of the organisation within the overall party effort. Westphalian SA leaders were in no doubt as to the value of the SA to the NSDAP. Since they considered the NSDAP as 'a state within the state', the SA was regarded as the cutting edge of the Nazi state, 'the sword of the movement'. In the words of SA-leader Voss, the SA was 'not a wander club, nor a Stahlhelm organisation. Our main function is to destroy the Marxist terror. The SA has to conquer the streets and thus prepare the ground for the conquest of the people.' 64) Throughout the 'period of struggle' the SA formed the 'propaganda corps of the movement', a ruthless, rowdy, activist terror organisation, a rallying point for the most fanatical members of the party. 65) For the growth of Nazism in Westphalia the presence of effective strong-arm

63) "Vergleichende Übersicht über die Mitgliederzahlen im Gau Westfalen", (n.d., covers the May and July period of 1930); copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

64) Extract from a speech by SA leader Voss at the Bezirksvertretertagung of Gross-Dortmund, 2 February 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

65) On the Westphalian SA see Beck, op. cit., p.99 ff.; on the propaganda activities of the SA in general see Zeman, op. cit., pp.13 ff..

squads was a basic necessity. The hostility of the Left, especially that of the Communists, made life very difficult for the radical Right. In most urban centres it was impossible for the Nazis to pursue active propaganda and to hold public meetings before an SA had been created. 66) As the party developed, the protective function of the SA became more and more important in view of the greater interest taken in the NSDAP by its political opponents, who were not averse to using force. The motto coined by Heinz Neumann, a member of the Communist Central Party Committee, 'Slay the fascists where you meet them', became a reality in the terror waged by the Communists against the Nazis in the late nineteen-twenties. The history of the Westphalian SA testifies to the effectiveness of the opposition by the Left. The years after 1925 were marked by an escalating number of physical conflicts and street-level confrontations. Although the intensity of public lawlessness increased after 1930, the type of violence employed by the opposing factions did not change fundamentally. The originators of much of the brutality occurring in the brawls and street battles were the Nazis themselves. In their desire to attract attention and to emphasize their radicalism, any method was used to intimidate their political opponents. 67)

The first recorded Westphalian 'Storm Troop' was that founded at Hagen in the spring of 1922 to protect Nazi party meetings from the disruptive tactics of left-wing opponents. 68) During the Ruhr occupation a number of völkisch-National Socialist commando groups emerged which were akin to SA groups and which accepted the overall authority of the Munich SA Oberkommando. 69) After the Munich putsch fiasco, these organisations severed their connections with the NSDAP. The re-appearance of a specifically Nazi para-military organisation occurred in the autumn of 1924 at a meeting in Bochum. This saw the

66) Beck, op. cit., p.100.

67) Cf. the example of the Berlin SA in Broszat, 'Die Anfänge der Berliner NSDAP', op. cit., pp.90 ff..

68) Rote Tribune, 28 April 1922.

69) See Chapter 4, p.152.

formation of a Bochum SA, which became the nucleus of what was later called 'Regiment Ruhr'. 70) The SA-Regiment Ruhr' expanded in the course of 1925 with the formation of a number of small SA groups in Hattingen, Gelsenkirchen, Buer, Herne, Dortmund and Hagen. 71) The growth enjoyed by the NSDAP after the re-organisation of the party in 1925 also led to the emergence of SA formations in many of the newly founded branches.

The functions of the SA were varied. The organisation protected party meetings, engaged in propaganda marches, participated in the election campaigns, and generally stood in the forefront of the political struggle waged by the Nazis. 72) In view of the small membership of individual SA groups combined action by the regional SA quickly became the order of the day. Party rallies, 'German Days', and the rare visits to the Gau by Hitler were all occasions at which the whole Gau SA was mustered to impress the population and protect the movement from outside interference. In the course of fulfilling these functions, and in the numerous clashes and street brawls, the SA formations developed an esprit de corps and an SA mythology which bound the heterogeneous membership together. The feeling of comradeship developed in the physical conflicts, the continuous emphasis in SA propaganda of the need for the SA member to sacrifice all for the movement, the flags, uniforms and fascist salute had considerable significance in the creation of internal unity and the cultivation of an elitist attitude. 73)

70) Report by the Gau SA Führung to the PL of the NSDAP, (n.d., probably summer of 1926): BAK NS I/342. Further Beck, op. cit., p.110.

71) Beck, op. cit., pp.110 ff..

72) For an account of an SA group 'in action' see the example provided by the Bielefeld SA in Hiemisch, op. cit., pp.23 ff..

73) Cf. "Richtlinien" of the Bielefeld SA (1925):

"11. Pflege von Kameradschaft ist die Vorbedingung für ein Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl ...

12. Die Fahne ist das Symbol unseres Freiheitskampfes. Unsere Treue gilt ihr bis zum Tode ...

13. Nur der ist würdig der SA anzugehören, der sich jederzeit klar darüber ist, dass er Vorkämpfer und Wegbereiter Adolf Hitlers ist, der die Macht des Gegners kennt, und daher auch weiss, dass nur unaufhörliche Arbeit unsere Bewegung zum Siege führen kann, ferner der die Bewegung über seine Person stellt, als hinge von ihm und seinem Handeln das Schicksal der Bewegung ab ..."

From Hiemisch, op. cit., p.25.

The organisation of the Westphalian SA was rudimentary in the first years of its existence. Apart from the presence of a Gau SA-leader there was little to be seen of a Gau SA hierarchical structure. 74) The individual SA groups were relatively autonomous and determined their own programme in the light of local conditions and resources. The creation of a systematic organisational structure and the development of the SA's 'Party Army' image occurred in the autumn of 1926. The turning point in the organisational history of the SA came with Hitler's appointment of von Pfeffer to lead the SA in the summer of 1926. 75) The latter proved an outstanding administrator and in a series of over 20 SA 'orders' and directives from 1926 onwards he gave the SA a solid national and regional organisational structure centralised on Munich. The major feature of the re-organisation was the separation of the SA from the political organisation of the party. This secured an independent position for the SA, emphasized for example by the fact that from the summer of 1927 onwards the party Uschla no longer retained jurisdiction over the SA members. 76) That this separation could lead to problems with the political leaders of the party was recognised by von Pfeffer from the start. 77) The re-organisation demanded a fundamental re-adjustment on the part of political leaders who viewed the SA as part and parcel of their local and regional organisations. There was also a considerable overlap in personnel, and many a branch leader was also local SA leader. 78) Under von Pfeffer's regime such a fusion of 'power' was no longer feasible since no party member was allowed to hold SA and political posts simultaneously. This situation opened the door to rivalry and tension between the SA and the party, occasioned by what were often petty squabbles over matters of authority and jurisdiction. 79)

74) Hiemisch, op. cit., p.25.

75) For the following Tyrell, op. cit., pp.226 ff.; Horn, op. cit., pp.288 ff..

76) Cf. "GRUSA III", 3 June 1927, reprinted in Jochmann, op. cit., pp.266-268.

77) Von Pfeffer to the Gauleiter, Munich, 1 October 1929; reprinted in Tyrell, op. cit., p.234.

78) See the example of Bielefeld in Hiemisch, op. cit., p.11.

79) Thus the dispute between the Brunswick branch and local SA leaders in May 1927 as to whether or not the branch leader could ban the taking of a flag to a meeting! See Noakes, op. cit., p.182.

In Westphalia the re-organisation of the SA was carried out smoothly. The only serious recorded conflict between the SA and the party was occasioned by a power struggle within the SA before von Pfeffer's measures were announced. The dispute accompanied the fusion of Gau Westphalia and Rhineland-North in March 1926, which led to a re-organisation of the Gau Ruhr SA under Lutze, the old SA leader of Rhineland-North. His appointment was resented by the Westphalian SA leader Herzog, who 'found it difficult to subordinate himself' to the new Gau SA leader. ⁸⁰⁾ The dispute between Lutze and Herzog widened to affect the relationship with the regional party leadership in the summer of 1926 owing to the appointment of Kaufmann as sole Gauleiter, a development which also upset Herzog. The triangular squabble which arose after his appointment was only solved by Hitler's direct intervention in a dispute which threatened to tear the Gau to pieces. ⁸¹⁾

Under Lutze the Ruhr SA expanded rapidly in 1926 and 1927. The SA shared in the general growth of the party after 1926. By January 1929, according to party records, the Ruhr SA was one of the bright spots in the national development of the SA. The Westphalian SA was the fourth strongest Gau organisation in Germany. ⁸²⁾ By the autumn of 1929 the total strength of the Westphalian SA was 1,250, organised in 39 units. The party machine could thus wield a useful instrument of terror in its efforts to persuade the population to take notice of the 'cause'. By far the largest units were attached to the growing urban branches of Bochum (165 strong), Dortmund (177), Hattingen (108), Gelsenkirchen-Buer (83), Hagen (50), and Herne (80). ⁸³⁾ SA recruitment was assisted by the ban on the Stahlhelm para-military organisation in Rhineland-Westphalia on 8 October 1929. ⁸⁴⁾ The NSDAP and the SA were the chief beneficiaries of the ban, which was used to attract the 'homeless' Stahlhelm

80) Gau SA Führung to PL NSDAP, (n.d.); BAK NS I/342.

81) Report by Kaufmann to PL Munich, July 1926: BAK NS I/342.

82) "Statistischen Rückblick auf das Kampfbjahr 1929": BAK Sammlung Schumacher, 415.

83) Copy of list of units comprising the "Gausturm Westfalen SA", dated 15 November 1929 in SAD MI IP/604.

84) On the background to the ban see Berghahn, op. cit., pp.131 ff..

members. From mid-October a steady influx of Stahlhelm members into the SA and NSDAP was observed by the authorities. ⁸⁵⁾ In isolated cases whole Stahlhelm branches transferred their allegiance to the Nazis, with new SA groups being drawn entirely from the converts. ⁸⁶⁾

In 1930 the SA continued to grow rapidly despite legislation designed to restrict the organisation. The uniform ban imposed on the SA in Prussia on 11 June 1930, though 'observed everywhere', had little effect on its development. ⁸⁷⁾ The Westphalian Gau SA hierarchy, in the light of the ban on the Stahlhelm, had expected much more drastic action by the authorities, and had prepared plans to counter a ban of the whole movement. In the spring of 1930 the regional party press encouraged SA members to join branches of the Nazi dominated 'Deutsche Turnerbund', which was to be the front organisation designed to keep the SA intact in the event of a ban. The SA responded to the advice and prepared itself to go underground. The consequence of the tactic was the appearance of a number of new branches of the 'Deutsche Turnerbund' throughout the province. ⁸⁸⁾ In the event a total ban on the SA did not materialise, though the possibility of such action was considered by the authorities. It was rejected on the grounds of impracticability 'since the SA did not form a close, united organisation with a legal status of its own'. ⁸⁹⁾

Apart from the uniform ban, which created some organisational handicaps, the SA had serious internal problems to contend with in the late nineteen-twenties. The major difficulty limiting the effectiveness of the organisation was its poor financial situation. The rapid expansion of party activity, and

85) Police report, Recklinghausen, 17 December 1929; Police reports, Bochum, 23 December 1929 and 19 February 1930: SAM VII - 65. Police report, Recklinghausen, 11 January 1930: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 6.

86) See the case of the NSDAP branch at Enger, which received 'a considerable membership influx' following the absorption of a complete Stahlhelm branch. On the basis of the influx a new SA unit numbering 30 members was founded - police reports, Bielefeld, 22 April and 16 July 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

87) Report by Police President, Bielefeld, 16 July 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

88) See the lengthy report on the 'Deutschen Turnerbund' and its connections with the SA by the police, Bochum, 4 April 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. In the same file - police report, Münster, 31 May 1930.

89) Circular by Oberpräsident, Münster 21 November 1929; report by Regierungspräsident, Minden, 14 December 1929: SAD MI IP/604.

the pressure this placed on the SA, outstripped its financial, and human, capabilities. On the national level the party leadership attempted to ease the problem by calling on the party branches to form 'Dispositionsfond' to finance the SA. These were to be created through 'voluntary' contributions made by the rank and file membership, every member being called upon to contribute 10 Marks. 90) This appeal was merely a repetition of previous ones which had failed to meet with much response. In 1930 the financial situation of the SA became more acute with the suspension of the SA tax, which had previously been raised by the Gaue and sent to Munich, to be redistributed to the various Gau SA. 91) The end of the tax placed the SA in the position of greater direct dependence on the goodwill of the political leadership. Since the political wing of the party was constantly short of funds to meet its own obligations, payments to the SA were not always fully met. For the SA adequate financial support was especially crucial at the time because of the large number of unemployed within its ranks, a number which increased as the economic depression deepened. 92) The demands made on the SA escalated dramatically in 1930. Propaganda marches, election meetings, house to house canvassing and numerous other duties burdened the SA at a time when the organisation was in constant readiness to assist the party, a situation which taxed the endurance of the membership. 93) In the summer of 1930 the tension and strain brought to a head the latent conflict between party and SA and von Pfeffer resigned in August. He felt, as did so many within the SA, that the organisation was not receiving its due from the party. 94) Unrest in the Berlin SA, led by the Osaf-Stellvertreter Ost, Walter Stennes, to which lack of money contributed, led to a review by Hitler of the financial situation of the SA. Thus the compulsory SA tax was re-introduced and the SA were given

90) "Rundschreiben" of the NSDAP, Munich to party branches, 15 October 1929 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

91) Noakes, op. cit., p.182.

92) Beck, op. cit., p.266 and p.380.

93) Beck, op. cit., p.101.

94) Horn, op. cit., pp.326 ff..

the right to a 50 per cent share in the proceeds of party meetings. In Westphalia the Gauleitung reached an agreement with the Osaf-Stellvertreter West, von Fichte, to prevent an outburst similar to the one which had occurred in Berlin.⁹⁵⁾ The agreement attempted to define the financial responsibilities of the two 'sides'. The Gauleitung secured the right to collect all the contributions secured at party meetings, and in return pledged itself to reimburse the SA for all 'the costs incurred in the fulfilment of the political duties it undertook'. In return, the SA agreed to stop collecting contributions at party meetings for its own purposes and to finance what were purely SA affairs out of its own resources. The new SA tax for which the Gau became responsible was administered according to instructions framed by Hitler. The tax was paid into a special fund controlled by the political organisation.

The new financial arrangements netted the Westphalian SA a total of 1,950 Marks in the first month of their operation.⁹⁶⁾ The money came just in time to appease the more restless SA elements in the Gau. The first distribution of cash came at a time of much grumbling and discontent among the regional SA units, which was censured by the Osaf-Stellvertreter West in his November directives: 'The number of enquiries on the part of Stürme to the Standarten and the Osaf-Stellvertreter West as to where the so-called SA-money has gone are increasing. In part these enquiries are phrased in a really peculiar fashion; a few even speak of a suspicion that these funds are being held back by the Standarten or other official organs. These enquiries are justified of course. But they should not assume the nature of a threat nor express such suspicions, for which there is absolutely no cause. The Osaf Stellvertreter West has reached agreement on the financial situation of the SA with every Gau. The main consideration throughout the deliberations has been to ensure that SA members will be freed from every possible increased burden, and to ensure that the SA will receive those funds which it absolutely needs in order to

95) For the following see "Rundschreiben, Gau Westfalen der NSDAP", Bochum, 27 October 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

96) Police report, Bochum, 28 November 1930; SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. Also "SABE" for November, OSaf Stellv. West, Düsseldorf, 11 November 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

continue its activities.' 97)

Further efforts to assist the SA were undertaken in the winter of 1930. In view of the many unemployed gathered in the ranks of the SA, the SA and local party branches, in conjunction with the NSF, set up a number of SA-Homes, which generally provided cheap food, acted as a 'social' centre, and as the centre for the distribution of second-hand clothes gathered by the NSF. 98) The SA-Homes assumed greater significance in the worsening economic climate in the early 'thirties. They became rallying centres for local SA units and developed a club-like atmosphere. They were also visible proof to the rank and file that the party 'cared' for its less fortunate members, and were thus a propaganda instrument which must not be underestimated - particularly in its power to attract the growing army of unemployed youths. By being able to offer one square meal a day the idea of joining the SA became more attractive. The SA-Homes were also visible proof of the Nazis' determination to realise the Volkgemeinschaft concept which loomed so large in the party's propaganda.

However acute the tensions between the SA and the political wing of the NSDAP may have been from time to time, the bond between the two, and the dependence of the party on its 'political soldiers', remained. Branch leaders needed the SA for many of their undertakings. Without it the existence of many branches would have been seriously threatened. This is especially true of the branches active in industrial towns, where the opposition from the Left reached new heights as the NSDAP became a political force of consequence. 99) Of the value of the SA to the Westphalian NSDAP there can be little doubt.

97) "SABE" for November 1930, Osaf-Stellvertreter West, Düsseldorf, 11 November 1930 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

98) Cf. the police report, Bochum, 21 November 1930; SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

99) Cf. the "Arbeitsplan 1930" for the Bezirk Gross-Dortmund - copy in SAM - 67 Bd. 1. Further the accounts on the SA in Beck, op. cit., passim.

The Rural Campaign.

Until 1929 the Westphalian Nazi party generally ignored the rural population and concentrated its major propaganda effort on securing the allegiance of the urban population.¹⁰⁰⁾ The wisdom of this policy was seriously questioned at national and regional levels after the success of the party in the north German agrarian regions of Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony in the 1928 election, success which reflected the widespread unrest which began to affect the rural population in the winter of 1927/1928. The lack of progress in the urban centres, the failure of the party to capture working class votes gave the party hierarchy much food for thought.

Although the unrest of the rural population in 1928 manifested itself most dramatically in Schleswig-Holstein, many rural parts of Germany were affected by an acute agrarian crisis which had been gathering momentum since the mid-nineteen-twenties.¹⁰¹⁾ Since the stabilisation of the currency after the post-war inflation, Germany's agrarian economy had undergone a gradually accelerating decline and by the end of the decade it was in a state of acute crisis.¹⁰²⁾ By 1928 the total indebtedness of German agriculture was close to the staggering total of ten billion Marks. This was in part the consequence of the inefficiency of the farming methods employed, but it was also due to the fact that agricultural prices were lagging behind those of industry, which made the cost of machinery, fertilisers, and equipment increasingly prohibitive. The financial burdens placed on the farmer also grew because of increased wage demands, higher taxes and social welfare payments, and the high rates of interest on loans, mortgages and related debts. As a consequence, farmers were

100) Gies asserts that the Nazis, with the exception of Schleswig-Holstein, largely ignored the rural population until 1930 - H. Gies, 'NSDAP und Landwirtschaftliche Organisationen in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik', Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte, 15, 1967, p.341. This view needs some correction in view of the Westphalian example. Noakes' study on Lower Saxony also undermines Gies' assertion; Noakes, op. cit., pp.121 ff.. Cf. Schön, op. cit., pp.145-154.

101) On the Schleswig-Holstein situation see Stoltenberg, op. cit., pp.107 ff..

102) For a brief review of the position of the agrarian sector of the German economy see W.T. Angress, 'The Political Role of the Peasantry in the Weimar Republic', Review of Politics, 21, 1959, pp.536-539.

continuously hovering on the brink of disaster, with foreclosures and forced sales a real threat to what they valued most in life: their land. As the economic crisis of the farming community became acute, the demands for help grew louder, and patience and conservatism gave way to unrest and a tendency towards rural anarchism, first seen in the events which unfolded in Schleswig-Holstein in the autumn of 1927.

In Westphalia the reaction of the farmers to the agrarian crisis was not as drastic as in northern Germany. But the authorities monitoring the attitudes of the farming community recorded a bitterness which brought with it the threat of violence. The reasons for the restlessness were the general lack of profitability of both the small- and large-scale farming units, the lack of capital and increasing indebtedness.¹⁰³⁾ The factors creating this situation in Westphalia were (i) overproduction and thus impoverishment of land during the war and post-war period; (ii) the loss of capital during the inflation; (iii) the loss of the 1923 harvest which was sold before the stabilisation of the Mark; (iv) the destruction of part of the 1924 harvest due to excessive rainfall during the summer and autumn; (v) a poor 1925 harvest accompanied by low wheat prices and a high cost of fertilisers; (vi) bad weather in 1926 accompanied by outbreaks of foot and mouth disease, a poor corn crop and low pig prices; and (vii) adverse conditions in 1927, with a mild winter and a damp summer producing an average harvest, but a low beet crop at a time of falling meat prices and rising costs of fodder. It is little wonder, given this catalogue of calamities, that the Westphalian farmers were in a crisis situation and debts accumulating rapidly. In County Tecklenburg alone the indebtedness of some 3,800 farms increased from 3.1 m. Marks in 1926 to 4.8 m. Marks by the beginning of 1928.¹⁰⁴⁾

Given this situation it is hardly surprising that the distress mobilised

103) For this and the following see the report by the Landrat, Lüdninghausen, 3 March 1928; SAM VII - 89 Bd. 2.

104) Report by Landrat, Tecklenburg, 5 March 1928; SAM VII - 89 Bd. 2.

what had traditionally been a very passive element of the population. From February 1928 mass meetings of farmers became a common feature, 'a reflection of the great distress on the farms in the whole province'. ¹⁰⁵⁾ A mammoth protest rally held in Münster in March, organised by the three major agrarian organisations active in Westphalia, attracted between 10,000 and 12,000 farmers. ¹⁰⁶⁾ The protests were accompanied by an increasingly hostile attitude towards the authorities and the state in general. What irked the farmers above all were the high level of taxation and the large sums 'spent on schools, welfare services and road improvement and construction'. ¹⁰⁷⁾ Local taxation officials bore the brunt of the verbal abuse of irate farmers. ¹⁰⁸⁾

The unrest and resentment were utilised and stimulated by the NSDAP to create support in the rural areas. Whereas only isolated meetings had been held in the agrarian counties of Westphalia in 1928, the year 1929 saw great efforts by the Nazis to win converts, primarily in the Protestant counties of the Minden region. Not having any specific agrarian programme, the Nazis, in the first phase of rural agitation, concentrated on heightening the fears of the farming community. The most popular themes of meetings were 'The Difficulties of Agriculture', 'Why is the German Farmer facing Extinction', 'Farmer, Your Farm and Land is in Danger'. The speeches were accompanied by the usual tirade against the government and state 'system'. ¹⁰⁹⁾ The intensity of the Nazi effort can be gauged from the fact that in September 1929 alone some 60 rural meetings were planned for the five rural, Protestant counties in the north-east of the Regierungsbezirk Minden. ¹¹⁰⁾ The systematic propaganda to which the rural population was subjected brought its rewards. The influence

105) Reports on several meetings in western Westphalia in the Bocholter und Borkener Volksblatt, 12 and 13 February 1928.

106) Report by Regierungspräsident, Münster, 9 March 1928; SAM VII - 89 Bd. 2.

107) Report by Landrat, Tecklenburg, 5 March 1928; police report, Recklinghausen, 5 March 1928; SAM VII - 89 Bd. 2. Report by Landrat, Halle 1./W., 22 February 1929; SAD MI IP/623.

108) Report by Landrat, Beckum, 8 February 1929; SAM VII - 64 Bd. 2.

109) Report by Regierungspräsident, Minden, 23 August 1929; SAD MI IP/604.

110) Report by Police President, Bielefeld, 31 August 1929; SAD MI IP/520.

of the Nazi movement increased. By the autumn of 1929 the success of the agitation was especially noticeable in north-eastern Westphalia, above all in the County Lübbecke, where it was thought by the authorities that the NSDAP had the majority of the population behind it.¹¹¹⁾ In contrast to the major advances registered in the Protestant counties, those made in predominantly Catholic rural regions were insignificant. The Nazis did not believe that they could secure much support from the Catholic farmer, and in consequence made little effort to do so. This attitude was realistic as is shown by the developments of the early 'thirties. The loyalty to their faith, the structure and solidarity inherent in Catholicism, did not allow an easy penetration into the ranks of the rural Catholic voter, and religious ties usually proved stronger than economic necessity.¹¹²⁾ The Nazis took the line of least resistance and concentrated on the Protestant counties. This is not to say that agitation in Catholic counties was non-existent. Urban-based party branches established in Catholic regions did make overtures to the agricultural population, but with little success.¹¹³⁾

The success of the Nazis in the Protestant rural areas diminished the support enjoyed by the DNVP and the DNVP-orientated Landbund. The DNVP's defence against the encroachment by the Nazis was to 'enlighten' the agrarian community as to the true nature of the NSDAP and its 'socialist ideas'. At a meeting of the DNVP regional organisation in Recklinghausen in May 1929 an offensive against Nazi agitation was initiated, designed to show that 'in reality the Nazis were arch-enemies of the landed population'. What was called 'the highly dubious attitude of the National Socialists towards private property' was emphasized above all.¹¹⁴⁾ This oblique reference to Point 17 of

111) Report by Regierungspräsident, Minden, 23 August 1929: SAD MI IP/520.

112) Cf. the observations of C.P. Loomis and J.A. Beegle, 'The Spread of German Nazism in Rural Areas', American Sociological Review, 1946, pp.724-734.

113) See the reports by the Landrat of Steinfurt, Burgsteinfurt, 21 August 1929; report by Landrat, Lüdninghausen, 19 August 1929: SAM VII - 89 Bd. 2; Landrat, Paderborn, 19 August 1929; report by Landrat, Wiedenbrück, 17 August 1929: SAD MI IP/604.

114) Police report on DNVP conference, Recklinghausen, 31 May 1929: SAM VII - 64 Bd. 2.

the official Nazi programme, which called for the 'unrenumerative expropriation of land for the common good' was no longer apposite. Until 1928 the ambiguity surrounding Point 17 had not been an asset to the Nazis in the rural regions. But since their major effort was directed towards winning the urban masses it was allowed to stand undefined. Once the Nazis switched their tactics on account of their success due to the agrarian crisis, Hitler was quick to interpret Point 17 to mean expropriation of that land only which had been 'secured in an unlawful manner' or had been 'administered contrary to the good of the Volk'. 115)

The anxiety of the DNVP to project the Nazis as 'expropriators' and 'radical socialists' is understandable given its waning influence in the Protestant agrarian regions of Westphalia. The DNVP's fears were based not only on the recognition of Nazi inroads in their traditional support, but also on fears about the emerging power of the Nazis within the Landbund, which had been closely allied to the DNVP before the Nazis appeared on the scene. Of the three Westphalian agricultural organisations, the Bauernverein (25,000 members), the Kleinbauernbund (4,000 members), and the Landbund, the first two were predominantly Catholic and Centre Party orientated. 116) The Landbund was influential in the non-Catholic areas of the Regierungsbezirke of Minden and Arnsberg, and had a membership of 15,000 which 'traditionally supported the DNVP'. In the course of 1929 subversion by pro-Nazi elements led by a former Landrat, Schulze-Pelkum, who was an influential landowner in central Westphalia, seriously undermined DNVP influence. By September 1929 one-fifth of the membership were thought to have deserted to the Nazi party.

The tactics employed by the NSDAP to win support in the rural areas in 1928 and 1929, were limited to pointing out the disastrous situation of the farmers, and to arguing that their position could only get worse under the

115) Gies, op. cit., pp.341 ff.; Angress, op. cit., p.546.

116) For this and the following see "Rechtsradikale Bewegung auf dem Lande" - report compiled by the police president of Recklinghausen, 2 September 1929: SAM VII - 89 Bd. 2.

'Weimar System'. These tactics were amended in the course of 1930 with the development of a positive agrarian programme. A circular issued by the Parteileitung in February 1930 outlined the attitude to be adopted by the party towards the agrarian population. Great emphasis was to be placed on driving home the fact that 'the recognition of inherited property was a central pillar of National Socialist policy'. ¹¹⁷⁾ In March 1930 a lengthy policy statement designed to secure support in rural regions was published by the party. ¹¹⁸⁾ Two months later Hitler called on a relatively obscure civil servant, R. Walther Darré, to organise the farmers for the party. The efforts of the Nazis to mobilise the farmers were to be centred on Darré's creation, the ApA, which was founded towards the end of 1930.

The construction of the ApA came after the Reichstag election of September 1930. In their agrarian campaign during the election the Nazis relied on the projection of the March programme and the influence of the agrarian depression. In Westphalia the progress made can be seen in the electoral breakthrough achieved in several rural counties, above all in the counties of Wittgenstein and Halle, where the Nazis secured relative majorities. In four of the five Protestant rural counties in the Regierungsbezirk Minden the NSDAP achieved very high returns by regional standards:

Halle	31.16
Herford	29.55
Lübbecke	26.4
Minden	20.46

These returns were two to three times higher than the average of 12.2 per cent secured by the party in the electoral district Westphalia-North as a whole. ¹¹⁹⁾

117) "Betr. Stellung der NSDAP zum Landvolk und zur Landwirtschaft", Rundschreiben der NS Reichsleitung, Organ. Abt. 11, Munich, 3 February 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bl. 1. The text is full of flattering remarks about the peasantry, which is variously described as 'Hauptträger völklicher Erbgesundheit', 'Jungbrunnen des Volkes', 'Rückgrat der Wehrkraft', etc.

118) "NS und Landwirtschaft. Parteiamtliche Kundgebung über die Stellung der N.S.D.A.P. zum Landvolk und zur Landwirtschaft"; dated March 1930; copy in BAK Sammlung Schumacher 214.

119) "Abgegebene Stimmen anlässlich der Reichstagswahl am 14.9.1930" - report by Bielefeld police, 6 November 1930; SAD MI IP/625; Milatz, op. cit., p.112.

Given that the party possessed only a rudimentary organisation in rural areas, the performance was impressive. Even in the Catholic county of H8xter, in which the NSDAP had but one party branch, the not insignificant figure of 10.97 per cent was recorded, a sign that the Catholic population was not entirely immune to the Nazi appeal. In 1931 the creation of an efficient Gau ApA exploited the breakthrough by systematically subjecting the agrarian population, both Protestant and Catholic, to a continuous barrage of propaganda.

Developments in Gau Propaganda.

Though the agrarian propaganda became an important ingredient in Nazi propaganda activity in the period 1928 to 1930, the main effort of the Westphalian NSDAP continued to be the traditional one of attempting to expound 'socialism' as interpreted by the party.¹²⁰⁾ The Nazis were forced to project a 'socialist', pro-labour image for tactical reasons. The success of the Nazis' anti-capitalist propaganda in the area also invited its continuation. The successful impact, and the influx of proletarian elements into the party in the industrial centres, was admitted even by the party's socialist opponents. The SPD especially viewed the drift of working class elements to the NSDAP with concern and attempted to stop the trend with a programme of 'rationally based socialist enlightenment'.¹²¹⁾ A second major consideration in the continuation of the pro-labour propaganda stemmed from the view held by the regional party hierarchy that the main hope for progress lay in winning over the supporters of the Left. Party leaders thought that the 'bourgeois orientated forces', affected by the economic crisis, would turn to the party in any case, without much effort by the party to attract them.¹²²⁾

To achieve their chief objective the Nazis' propaganda assumed such a

120) Even in predominantly agrarian regions this aspect of Nazi propaganda figured prominently. In the adjacent Gaue of Lower Saxony to the north and east of the province, with only small industrial areas, the efforts to attract the worker were not given up; Noakes, op. cit., pp.174 ff..

121) See especially the Westfälische Allgemeine Volks-Zeitung, 2 July 1930.

122) "Rundschreiben", Gau Westphalia, Bochum, 8 May 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

radical tone that it was almost impossible to distinguish, at least in its anti-capitalist sentiments, from that of the Left. ¹²³⁾ The most popular themes were the standard ingredients of the propaganda of the mid-'twenties. The vague 'Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft' slogan figured prominently, along with attacks on the 'parasitic exploitation' of the people by syndicates, trusts, and department stores. ¹²⁴⁾ At meetings in urban areas at which miners and other 'workers' were used as speakers, the audience was promised that the advent to power by the NSDAP would be accompanied by 'an end of the exploitation of the worker by capital', and a re-organisation of the existing economic system since this 'was responsible for the creation of the high unemployment' currently affecting society. ¹²⁵⁾ The choice facing the working class, the Nazis maintained, was a simple one: either a continuation of 'capitalist servitude' or 'freedom under National Socialism'. ¹²⁶⁾ The striking aspect of many of the Nazi speeches is the vagueness of the party's labour programme. The absence of a clear 'socialist' platform was disguised by a plethora of emotional slogans. Such an approach was so effective because of the dire economic situation in which the population found itself, or feared to find itself. Primitive 'bread and work' formulas became much more meaningful in a period of rising unemployment. To many workers they were more comprehensible and immediate than an exposition of a defined 'socialist' doctrine.

The Nazis pursued two other themes: attacks on the SPD and KPD, and violent anti-Semitism. Of the two left-wing parties the SPD was the prime object of ridicule and contempt. Singled out above all was the SPD bureaucracy and the party's habit of exploiting its members through its 'boss-rule'. Common titles of Nazi meetings illustrate the anti-SPD approach. They included such favourites

123) Cf. report by police, Recklinghausen, 12 October 1929: SAM VII - 2 Bd. 6. Also report by Regierungspräsident, Minden, 23 August 1929: SAD MI IP/604.

124) Numerous reports in files SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. and SAD MI IP/604 covering the 1929-1930 period.

125) See especially report by Landrat, Lüdninghausen, 30 August 1930; police reports, Beckum, 26 August and 9 September 1930; SAM - 67 Bd. 1.

126) Police report, Minden, 13 February 1930: SAD MI IP/604.

as 'Eleven Years of SPD Betrayal of the People', and 'The Stupefaction of the German Nation by the SPD'. The verbal assault by the Nazis on the KPD was more muted. One cannot help feeling that the Nazis had a greater 'respect' for the rank and file KPD members, admired their commitment and fanaticism, which paralleled their own. The frequent street brawls between the Nazis and Communists contributed towards a feeling of grudging admiration.

No consideration beyond blind hatred moved the Nazis in their attitude towards the Jews. In line with Hitler's anti-Semitic obsession, the Westphalian NSDAP worked in anti-Jewish propaganda at every possible moment.¹²⁷⁾ In their attacks on the 'marxist' parties, the Jewish influence 'which misguided the working class masses' was emphasized ad nauseam. The excesses of capitalism were associated with the supposed Jewish stranglehold over the German economy. High unemployment, the distress of the artisans, of the middle class in general, and the 'exploitation of the worker' were all, according to the NSDAP, attributable to the Jews.

From 1929 the Nazis developed new propaganda themes designed to fan the rising discontent in Germany. In the forefront was the 'misery' theme and the 'disaster' prophecies which were tied to the accelerating economic depression. This became a constant ingredient in the party's agitation. The themes of meetings indicate the approach adopted by the party: 'People in Need, who will save you?', 'The new-German Bankruptcy - National Socialist Reconstruction', 'Our Fight for Freedom and Bread', 'Before State Bankruptcy', 'Who will Save Germany?', 'The Struggle of the German Woman for Freedom and Bread', 'The

127) Their choice was extensive given Hitler's guidelines as laid down in 'Mein Kampf', in which Hitler associated the Jews with, and/or made them responsible for, a long list of 'defects and blemishes', such as democracy (p.72), Social Democracy (p.56), Bolshevism (p.296), Marxism (p.195 and p.290), the Trade Union Movement (p.292), Capitalism (p.281), the 'interest-slavery' of the money lender (p.282 and p.285), the free press (p.57, p.79 and p.290), Parliamentarianism (p.79), Liberalism (pp.54-55), Internationalism (p.294), anti-militarism (p.247), class warfare (pp.289-290), modernism in art (p.296), prostitution (p.55) - etc..

Economic Depression of the German Reich', and similar titles. ¹²⁸⁾ Though the speeches underlined what everyone knew already, prophecies of doom and the remedies offered by 'the only party which could save the nation', were hammered home relentlessly. Further fuel was added to the party's propaganda with the Young Plan proposals of June 1929. This measure, designed to ease the reparation problem by spreading the burden over a time-span of 59 years, gave the Nazis a new, nationalist theme with which to whip up unrest. ¹²⁹⁾ In conjunction with the DNVP, the Stahlhelm and the Landbund, the party engaged in an extensive propaganda campaign against the acceptance of the plan. The anti-Young campaign, for which the finances were supplied largely by the DNVP, culminated in a plebiscite held on 22 December 1929. ¹³⁰⁾ The chief beneficiaries of the campaign were the National Socialists. Fed by DNVP funds, the NSDAP was able to increase its propaganda activity to new heights. The major consideration of the Nazis in the campaign was not the success of the plebiscite, but the expansion of the party. In Westphalia the Gauleitung tended to organise its own rallies and propaganda drives without regard to the activities of its 'partners', and it remained aloof from mammoth regional rallies in order to further independent action designed to increase party membership. ¹³¹⁾

The propaganda of the Westphalian NSDAP, despite its strong 'socialist' emphasis, was ideologically in agreement with the national party line. By 1930 the Gauleitung and Gau propaganda apparatus adjusted itself to the twists

128) See the numerous reports on Nazi meetings in the files SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1 and SAD MI IP/604.

129) Cf. Pridham, op. cit., p.84 ff.; Noakes, op. cit., pp.147-148.

130) Of the 53 Stadt- and Landkreise into which Westphalia was divided only 7 gave the anti-Young coalition over 10 per cent support. The best returns were secured in the Counties of Siegen, Lübbbecke and Halle (between 20 and 40 per cent). These were areas in which the DNVP and Landbund had strong followings. See Milatz, op. cit., appendix, map "Der Volksentscheid am 22 Dezember 1929".

131) This calculation motivated Gauleiter Wagner, as seen in his letter to Strasser, Bochum, 2 September 1929: BAK NS 22/1076.

and turns of the Partelleitung with considerable alacrity.¹³²⁾ Propaganda determined by regional considerations could, however, conflict at times with the strategy pursued by Munich. The pro-labour, anti-capitalist attitude of the Rhenish-Westphalian movement embarrassed Hitler above all in the autumn of 1928 at a time when he was in the process of cementing the party's ties with the Kirdorf circle. An article in Terboven's 'Die Neue Front', a weekly newspaper which served as Gau organ for Westphalia, launched a strong attack on the Rhenish-Westphalian Coal Syndicate, which upset Kirdorf, a founder of the syndicate, and led to his resignation from the NSDAP.¹³³⁾ There was as yet no national uniformity of Nazi propaganda, which created difficulties from time to time on a number of issues. An example of regional variations in propaganda was the 'National Bolshevist' outbursts of the north German party newspapers, which created problems for a number of Gaue. The assertion by Count von Reventlow in an article in Der nationale Sozialist in April 1930 that the NSDAP had views similar on economic and social questions to those of the SPD and the KPD was anathema to the more 'conservative' Nazi leaders. Josef Grohé, business-manager of Gau Rhineland-South and editor of the Westdeutscher Beobachter, viewed such attitudes as especially damaging since they made it very difficult to refute the charges made by the DNVP and the Wirtschaftspartei that the NSDAP was 'marxist'.¹³⁴⁾

If Nazi propaganda in Westphalia was characterised in general by an aggressive tone, in one respect it was very much on the defensive: the party's attitude to religion. The denominational parity in the province presented the party with a serious dilemma. An anti-Catholic slant, which could have been useful in the Protestant regions, was not feasible. An irreligious

132) A good example of this is the acceptance without reservation of the 'hostile' attitude adopted by the PL towards the Young campaign partners in the spring of 1930. The new party line was faithfully reflected in the Westphalian propaganda. See police report, Bielefeld, 16 July 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

133) On this episode see Kele, op. cit., pp.128-129. Further H.A. Turner, Jr., 'Emil Kirdorf and the Nazi Party', Central European History, 1, 1968.

134) Redaktion, Westdeutscher Beobachter to R. Hess, 13 April 1930: BAK Sammlung Schumacher, 260.

approach in general was not possible even in the Protestant areas. The convictions of the Protestants had to be considered by the party, and concern was indeed constantly shown for their religious susceptibilities. Homann, district leader of Bielefeld, became very concerned at the time of the September election of 1930 because of the appearance, in third place, of an agnostic on the Nazi list of candidates for the electoral district of Westphalia-North. In view of the 'strong religiosity' of the predominantly Protestant population of his region he viewed such a candidature as 'catastrophic'. The damage it could do to the party, he wrote to Strasser, 'was underlined by the intense interest shown in the religious issue at every meeting, at which the most frequent question raised was the one of "How does the party stand in relation to the Church and religion?"'. ¹³⁵⁾ More delicate still was the relationship of the NSDAP with the Catholic Church. ¹³⁶⁾ Here the situation was complicated by the presence of the political arm of the Church, the Centre Party, and the extensive Catholic press, which was generally quick to exploit any mistake made by the Nazis in their handling of religious questions. Until 1930 the Catholic Church, press and Centre Party, had largely ignored the relatively insignificant Nazi movement. As the NSDAP expanded its activities and grew in size and influence, it was subjected to much more analysis, and its programme was examined with greater care. Concern was shown by the Catholic press on the question of the National Socialists' attitude towards the Catholic Church. ¹³⁷⁾ In the September election the major attack by the Centre Party was concentrated on exposing the NSDAP's 'hostile attitude towards the Catholic Church'. ¹³⁸⁾

The Westphalian Nazis were very careful not to attack religion at their meetings. ¹³⁹⁾ At most the party advocated the exclusion of the clergy from

¹³⁵⁾ Homann to Strasser, Bielefeld, 8 September 1930: BAK NS 22/1076.

¹³⁶⁾ On this problem in general see Fridham, op. cit., pp.146 ff..

¹³⁷⁾ See especially the issue of the Münsterische Morgenpost, 18 October 1930.

¹³⁸⁾ Tremonia, 1 September 1930; further K. Klotzbach, Gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Widerstand und Verfolgung in Dortmund 1930-1945, Hannover, 1969, p.31.

¹³⁹⁾ This is true of Nazi agitation in the Rhenish-Westphalian region as a whole. Cf. Kühn, op. cit., pp.144-145.

politics, but it was careful to emphasize repeatedly that National Socialists believed in the right of the individual to worship freely, a right which would be observed in the coming Nazi state. 140) It was unfortunate for the Nazis in Rhineland-Westphalia that while their regional organisation might observe a neutral attitude towards the Churches, especially towards the Catholic Church, other Gaue in northern and eastern Germany, where the Protestant Church predominated, felt free to let fly their anti-Catholic broadsides, which were then picked up in the Rhenish-Westphalian Catholic press to justify its attack on the local Nazi movement. Grohé's letter to Hess in April 1930 lamented this and the lack of a national party policy on religious questions. Grohé felt that 'several newspapers of our movement are very tactless in their attitudes towards Rome and the Papacy' and were creating great difficulties for the movement in western Germany. Singled out for criticism were a number of anti-Christian articles which had appeared in the Deutsche Wochenschau, the Ostdeutscher Beobachter, and Der nationale Sozialist. In them atheistic views had been expounded which did great damage to the movement in both Catholic and Protestant areas of the Rhineland. 141)

To project their views the Nazis used the by now traditional methods of propaganda, with public meetings and regional party rallies at the head of their list of priorities. The verbal approach took precedence over any other form of agitation. 142) The only noticeable change was the intensity of the propaganda effort. A stream of meetings had been a characteristic of party agitation even in the early years of the movement. From 1929 onwards the stream became a flood. In the months April to June 1930 the Regierungsbezirk Minden alone saw 60 Nazi meetings, as against one by the DNVP, three by the DVP, one by the SPD and two by the KPD. 143) In the run-up to the September

140) Thus Wagner at a meeting in Recklinghausen - police report, Recklinghausen, 30 August 1930; also report by Landrat, Ahaus, 30 August 1930; police report, Beckum, 26 August 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

141) Redaktion Westdeutscher Beobachter to R. Hess, 13 April 1930: BAK Sammlung Schumacher, 260.

142) Cf. Zeman, op. cit., p.29.

143) "Lagebericht 2", Police President, Bielefeld, 16 July 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

election the party held 259 meetings in the same area, a quarter of all the political meetings, which totalled 1,002. ¹⁴⁴⁾ In November and December 1930 a further 116 Nazi meetings were organised which accounted for just over 40 per cent of the total of 288. This period saw the Bielefeld local elections, which alone accounted for 58 of the 112 meetings held by opposition parties in the Regierungsbezirk. ¹⁴⁵⁾ The Nazi effort was prodigious, and at a time when the Gauleitung was lamenting the lack of speakers available in Westphalia! ¹⁴⁶⁾

The large number of meetings gave several advantages to the NSDAP. In the first place the fact that the Nazis attracted good attendances, despite entrance fees ranging from 20 to 40 Pf., allowed the movement to pay its way. Indeed, the NSDAP was the only political party which could cover the cost of meetings through entrance receipts. ¹⁴⁷⁾ Carefully organised mass meetings at which the leading party figures spoke also gave large profits to the movement. The rare meetings at which Hitler spoke were especially useful in filling the party treasury. ¹⁴⁸⁾ Aside from the financial consideration, the effect of the meetings was often 'sensational', especially in the smaller towns and in the rural areas. ¹⁴⁹⁾ In the absence of other political activity, the Nazis had the field to themselves. Their meetings, and the 'show' which generally accompanied them, were a point of discussion, a focus of attention for the local press, which was bound to report the event in some form and thus give the party free propaganda.

144) "Lagebericht 3", Police President, Bielefeld, 6 November 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

145) "Lagebericht 4", Police President, Bielefeld, January 1930: SAD MI IP/625.

146) "Rundschreiben der GL NSDAP Westfalen", Bochum, 8 July 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

147) Report by Police President, Bielefeld, 31 August 1930: SAD MI IP/520.

148) A Hitler meeting in Bielefeld in November 1930 drew an audience of 7,000 despite the high entrance charges ranging from 1 to 5 Marks - police report, Bielefeld, 18 November 1930: SAD MI IP/606.

149) Police report, Bielefeld, 31 August 1929: SAD MI IP/520.

Of great impact were the increasing number of district meetings, party rallies and Gau conferences which punctuated the history of the NSDAP in the early nineteen-thirties. These were superbly orchestrated events, carefully organised and stage-managed for maximum impact both on the participant and the onlooker. ¹⁵⁰⁾ Action by political opponents, usually by the 'Antifa' of the KPD, ensured that the spotlight would fall on these events. ¹⁵¹⁾ Further publicity was given by the widespread reporting and analysis of the speeches and proceedings at Gau meetings in the local and regional press. ¹⁵²⁾ The district party meetings, organised on a much smaller scale, were also of significance in that they were inevitably accompanied by a spate of other meetings and propaganda marches in the localities in which they were held. The appearance of well known Nazi leaders boosted the morale of party branches and stimulated greater interest in the local population. ¹⁵³⁾ In retrospect these events were often seen by the Nazis as 'a milestone in the development of National Socialism' in a particular area. ¹⁵⁴⁾

By the late nineteen-twenties the Nazis had developed a variety of techniques to project their ideas. The party continued to copy any practice which

- 150) Emphasis was invariably placed on size of turn-out and on the smooth functioning of the event. A huge turn-out was desired to 'demonstrate the progress made by the movement'; it was ensured by the dictatorial mobilisation of all branches by the GL. Cf. the instructions by the GL to the branches for the Gauparteitag in Dortmund in May 1930 - "Rundschreiben der GL NSDAP Westfalen", Bochum, 14 April 1930; and "Anordnung", Wagner to OG, Bochum, 29 April 1930: copies in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.
- 151) A major effort was made by the Westphalian leadership of the Antifa to mobilise its membership on the occasion of the Dortmund Gauparteitag of the NSDAP, with instructions to disrupt the proceedings - police report, Recklinghausen, 30 April 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. The Communist press likewise urged the working class to provide an appropriate reception for the 'guard of trust capitalism'; see Westfälischer Kämpfer, 28 April and 2 May 1930.
- 152) Cf. the analysis of the Dortmund Gauparteitag in General Anzeiger, 5 May 1930; Westfälische Allgemeine Volks-Zeitung, 5 May 1930; Tremonia, 5 May 1930; Dortmunder Zeitung, 5 May 1930; for the Nazi view see Die neue Front, 9 May 1930.
- 153) See the report on the Bezirkstagung held at Enger-Besenkamp in June 1930 in "Lagebericht 2", Police President, Bielefeld, 16 July 1930: SAD MI IP/625.
- 154) Thus Hiemisch on the Bezirksparteitag at Tengern, 8/9 June 1929 in Hiemisch, op. cit., p.49.

seemed to promise success. One was taken from the KPD in the summer of 1930, when the Gauleitung urged the formation of a Nazi street cell system designed to facilitate the penetration of working class districts. The cells held weekly discussion meetings which explained what National Socialism was about. The meetings were also used to further the readership of the Nazi press. 155) Much emphasis continued to be placed on the less spectacular routine work of the party: house to house canvassing and the distribution of pamphlets and party literature, work which formed the basis of much of branch propaganda throughout the years of 'struggle'. 156) To overcome the chronic shortage of speakers 'Schools of Politics' were organised in the larger branches. 157) Their function was to familiarise the participants with the party's views on political, economic and cultural matters through a weekly lecture programme, attendance at which was compulsory for all local party officials.

To break up the pattern of political activity the Nazis periodically arranged gatherings at which entertainment took precedence. These 'German Evenings', pioneered in the mid-'twenties, became common by 1930 and were encouraged by the Gauleitung, which held the view that these events 'if they are carefully organised, possess real propaganda value'. 158) The 'German Evenings' involved a mixture of politics and entertainment. Their typical content is indicated in the programme of one such event organised by the Gelsenkirchen branch:

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- 155) Police report, Bochum, 13 May 1930; "Rundschreiben GL Westfalen", Bochum, 8 May 1930 (copy): SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. Further, report by Police President, Bielefeld, 16 July 1930: SAD MI IP/625.
- 156) The GL placed great importance on 'routine propaganda', which cost very little and was thus well within the capacity of every branch to perform - cf. "Rundschreiben GL Westfalen", Bochum, 8 May 1930, copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. Also report on branch activity at the Bezirksvertretertagung of the Dortmund district, section "Tätigkeitsbericht 1929", 2 February 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.
- 157) Police report, Bielefeld, 16 July 1930: SAD MI IP/625.
- 158) "Rundschreiben GL Westfalen", Bochum, 8 May 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. Also police report, Bochum, 13 May 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

Opening march / Entrance of the SA standards and flags / Initial address / Speech of welcome / Song 'We are the army of the swastika' / Music piece / Address by district leader Dr. Meyer / German anthem / Beethoven quartet / Music piece / Consecration of Sturmflagge 25 / SA song 'The Flag up high'

Interval

Beethoven quartet / Tragi-comedy.

Interval

German dances / Exhibition of local handicrafts. 159)

Of great propaganda value was another feature of Nazi activity employed constantly, namely the rituals which accompanied any major gathering of the SA and the party: the inevitable wreath-laying at monuments commemorating the fallen of World War One. This type of activity assisted the Nazis in stirring up the intense nationalism which formed a basic ingredient of much of their propaganda.

The NSDAP engaged in an intensive and varied propaganda which was to become the most striking feature of the political landscape after 1929. The Nazis were quick to adjust their tactics to meet any eventuality. The flexibility of approach and the content of the message took into consideration the nature of the population and the supposed prejudices and outlook of the people appealed to. Little effort was wasted on themes which the Nazis thought inappropriate for specific social groups. Thus at the time of intense rural agitation in the Herford region in 1929, when meeting after meeting in the rural areas was concerned with the plight of the German peasantry, not one word was wasted on this topic in the meetings held in the town of Herford itself. 160) In framing their local propaganda the branch and propaganda leaders had considerable independence. The 'Campaign Plan for 1930' of branches situated in

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- 159) Police report, Gelsenkirchen, 17 July 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. In this meeting some 500 people took part, paying 50 Pf. each. According to the police observer the audience 'represented all social groupings, which applauded the proceedings with great enthusiasm'.
- 160) Report by the Regierungspräsident, Minden, 23 August 1929: SAD MI IP/604.

the Dortmund district demonstrates the individualist approach. The Hamm branch thought that its best hope lay in winning over the middle class and moved the question of the 'Mittelstand' into the forefront of its propaganda agitation. The Mengede branch believed that the Stahlhelm membership provided good prospects for conversion and focused its energy in that direction. In Westerfilde the branch leader wanted to concentrate on winning over the patriotic associations, which were strongly represented in the town and were considered to be an ideal target. In Selm, Bork, Nordkirchen and Olfen, where the party membership was composed almost entirely of miners, propaganda appealing to the interests of the miners and working class in general was to be pursued. 161)

The greater sophistication of Nazi propaganda and the various techniques developed by 1930 were to be fully demonstrated in the Reichstag election of September 1930. Compared to the efforts of 1928, the 1930 campaign was pursued with a vigour which was fuelled by the hope of success.

The Breakthrough: The Reichstag Election of 14 September 1930.

The Reichstag election of 1930 took place in the midst of a profound political crisis set in motion by the collapse of the Müller government in March 1930. The immediate reason for its fall had been the inability of the SPD and DVP coalition partners to compromise on the issue of the reform of unemployment insurance. The new government, headed by Brüning, possessed only a narrow parliamentary base. Its failure to obtain the consent of parliament to a deflationary package introduced in July 1930 led to the dissolution of parliament and the September election. The use meanwhile of Article 48 to enforce the deflationary policy by emergency decree undermined the principle of government by consent, and in retrospect it can be seen to have placed the Weimar Republic on the slippery slope which was to end in the collapse of the constitutional and democratic system. 162) The reason behind the political crisis

161) Report on the "Bezirksvertretertagung Bezirk Gross-Dortmund", 2 February 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

162) On the background to the 1930 crisis see W. Conze, 'Die politischen Entscheidungen in Deutschland 1929-1933', in W. Conze and H. Raupach (eds.), Die Staats- und Wirtschaftskrise des Deutschen Reiches 1929/1933, Stuttgart, 1967, pp.176 ff.; and K.D. Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie, Villingen, 1964, pp.331 ff..

was of course the economic depression. Some three million unemployed, increased taxation and decreased salaries combined to create widespread dissatisfaction.¹⁶³⁾

The Nazis entered the election full of optimism. At the height of the campaign Gauleiter Wagner prophesied a minimum five-fold increase in the number of parliamentary mandates which the NSDAP would secure.¹⁶⁴⁾ The content of the Nazi election propaganda was very much the same as that which had been put forward for much of 1929 and 1930. The main emphasis fell on explaining the party programme, on exploiting fears about the economic crisis, and on condemning the 'system'. All other parties came in for abuse and mud-slinging. The intellectual content of the propaganda left much to be desired. It was little more than a mixture of 'loud-mouthed phraseology' laced with 'irrational promises'.¹⁶⁵⁾

The effort invested by the Nazis in the election campaign was not matched by any of their major rivals. From the end of July onwards the party machine moved into overdrive and subjected the population to a continuous barrage of words. Dedication and careful organisation overcame the party's main deficiencies, the usual problem of lack of cash, but more important in this instance, the lack of an adequate corps of speakers. There were few well-known speakers available to the Gau and most of the larger meetings relied on Gauleiter Wagner to attract the crowds. The party overcame the handicap by using its limited resources to the utmost. In the Bielefeld district, a major growth point in 1929 and 1930, the party had only 8 trained speakers available to cover the bulk of the Regierungsbezirk Minden, as well as assisting in the adjacent Land Lippe-Detmold, which formed part of Gau Westphalia.¹⁶⁶⁾ The

163) Cf. C.P. Kindleberger, Die Weltwirtschaftskrise, Munich, 1973, pp.145 ff..

164) Wagner at Recklinghausen meeting, 11 September 1930 - police report, Recklinghausen, 17 September 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

165) Thus the description in Tremonia, 15 September 1930. Cf. the view of Pollock: 'Its (the NSDAP's) campaign talk was the sheerest drivel. Never - even at home - have I heard such blithering nonsense'; J.K. Pollock, Jr., 'The German Reichstag Election of 1930', The American Political Science Review, 24, 1930, p.993.

166) For this and the following see Hiemisch, op. cit., pp.57-59,

limited number of speakers formed the spearhead of a propaganda campaign inaugurated by district leader Homann at a regional party conference, held two days after the dissolution of parliament, at which he outlined the main electoral strategy of the NSDAP. From 20 July onwards the campaign was in full swing. Each of the 8 district speakers made on average between 40 and 60 speeches at party meetings before polling day, as well as attending rival party meetings in the capacity of 'discussion speakers'.

The party workers engaged in a variety of tasks during the campaign. If meetings were the central propaganda instrument, the less spectacular routine work, such as canvassing and the distribution of pamphlets and placards, occupied the bulk of the party faithful. 167) The resources and resilience of the SA were above all subjected to a severe test. The much greater attention given to the party by left-wing opponents meant that numerous Nazi meetings were transformed into brawls. In the urban areas of the Ruhr the KPD called the tune in many Nazi meetings by turning up in great numbers, disrupting the proceedings at will, and even determining the amount of time allowed to the Nazi speakers. The SA and the police were unable to intervene effectively. 168) The Nazis themselves employed the same provocative tactics to disrupt SPD and KPD meetings whenever possible. 169) Such negative tactics became a normal feature of electioneering in the campaigns after 1930. The Nazis, always ready to learn from their political opponents, also adopted what was for them the new 'street chorus' technique popularised by the KPD. 170) The Nazis even

167) See the many reports in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1., especially the police reports, Recklinghausen, 31 July, 4 August and 17 September 1930.

168) Report by OG Dortmund, 20 August 1930; copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

169) A catalogue of disturbances by Nazis of SPD and KPD meetings is contained in the report by the police, Bochum, 11 September 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

170) Popular Communist rhymes which taxed the vocal chords of many a Communist went

'Wer hält das Volk in Tyrannei?'

'Wer hat das Volk verraten?'

'Wer hält die Menschen dumm?'

In Klotzbach, op. cit., p.33.

'Die Volkspartei!'

'Die Sozialdemokraten!'

'Das Zentrum!'

went so far as to copy some of the KPD slogans. ¹⁷¹⁾ One new technique first employed extensively by the NSDAP in the 1930 campaign, and one which it made very much its own, was the use of motorised transport to help with its propaganda effort. ¹⁷²⁾ In this the party was aided by the employment of the first group of motorised SA (initially called the Nationalsozialistischer Automobilkorps (NSAK)), which had been formed in the Gau in April 1930. ¹⁷³⁾ By the time of the election campaign this 'new propaganda weapon' was used to 'extend the action radius (sic) of the party's political propaganda'. It gave greater mobility to the Nazis and was of considerable value in enabling the SA to protect many more meetings. The use of its own transport allowed the movement to carry out much more propaganda in the rural areas, where the appearance of a column of motorised SA was in itself an effective propaganda trick. ¹⁷⁴⁾

The election in Westphalia showed significant changes in voting habits and participation. As was general throughout Germany the election saw many more votes cast compared to 1928. In Westphalia-North the percentage increase of valid votes was 5.9 per cent (77.3 per cent in 1928 as against 83.4 per cent), in Westphalia-South the increase was higher with 7 per cent (77.0 per cent to 84.0 per cent). The electoral participation in Westphalia was thus marginally higher than the national average of 81.4 per cent. ¹⁷⁵⁾ The result,

171) A report by the police in Recklinghausen noted that the typical Nazi 'rhymes' went as follows

'Wer hat uns verraten?'

'Die Sozialdemokraten!'

'Wer macht uns frei?'

'Die Hitlerpartei!'

'Juda'

'Verrecke!'

"Bei den Chören kann man nicht etwa von Rufen und Sprechen reden, sondern es handelt sich um ein regelrechtes Brüllen. Die Wirkung blieb auch nicht aus; aus allen Ecken strömten Neugierige herbei"; police report, Recklinghausen, 27 August 1930; SAM VII - 67 Bl. 1.

172) "Der Einsatz motorisierter Kräfte im politischen Kampf war neu und blieb, trotz aller Versuche im gegnerischen Lager, der jungen (NS) Bewegung vorbehalten;" - thus A. Schröder, Mit der Partei vorwärts: Zehn Jahre Gau Westfalen-Nord, Detmold, 1940, p.134; similarly Beck, op. cit., p.141.

173) For the following see Beck, op. cit., p.141 ff..

174) On the impact of the motorised SA in the rural areas see the report by the Landrat, Borken, 8 September 1930; SAM VII - 67 Bl. 1.

175) Percentage returns taken from Milatz, op. cit., pp.86 ff..

in percentages, was as follows:

	Westph.-N.	Westph.-S.	Reich
NSDAP	12.2	13.9	18.3
DNVP	5.9	3.9	7.0
DVP	4.9	6.0	4.5
Centre Party	31.5	22.1	14.8
Staatspartei	2.1	2.7	3.8
SPD	19.8	21.3	24.5
KPD	11.3	17.0	13.1
Others	12.3	13.0	14.0

In terms of votes cast the gains and losses recorded by the parties in relation to the 1928 election were:

	Westph.-N.		Westph.-S.	
	Gains	Losses	Gains	Losses
NSDAP	148,859		175,761	
DNVP		32,054		50,918
DVP		34,910		46,543
Centre Party	45,530		25,711	
Staatspartei		2,377		13,110
SPD		26,652		62,961
KPD	45,404		93,845	
Others		273	59,240	
Total Vote	144,527		180,947	176)

The main beneficiaries of the increased turn-out were the two extremist parties, the NSDAP and KPD. The increased poll of the NSDAP was based largely on support secured from new voters or former non-voters. If one assumes that radical voting changes (e.g. from KPD or SPD to NSDAP, or DNVP to SPD) were fairly rare, the second major catchment area of the NSDAP were the former supporters of the DNVP and DVP. The Nazis also secured votes from a number of other bourgeois parties and interest groups, primarily from the Wirtschaftspartei, which lost 21,444 votes in Westphalia. One can assume that the bulk of these went to the NSDAP since the chief centres of support for the Wirtschaftspartei were the Siegerland and Bielefeld areas, in which the NSDAP did very well in 1930. 177)

176) Figures taken from W. Dittmann, Das Politische Deutschland vor Hitler, Zürich, 1945.

177) On the Wirtschaftspartei in Westphalia see M. Schumacher, Mittelstandsfrente und Republik. Die Wirtschaftspartei - Reichspartei des deutschen Mittelstandes 1919-1933, Düsseldorf, 1972, pp.95-96; election statistics p.222.

Despite the dramatic gains secured by the Westphalian NSDAP, the returns secured fell well below the national average. For an explanation of the relatively poor performance one need not look far: the social and religious structure of the province worked against the movement. The major obstacle was the Catholic Centre Party which dominated politics in 30 of the 53 urban and rural electoral units into which Westphalia was divided. In 20 of these units the Centre Party secured an absolute majority.¹⁷⁸⁾ In its election campaign the Centre Party had concentrated on two broad issues. It defended its association with the 'authoritarian' Brüning government while refuting the charge that the party had 'betrayed democracy'.¹⁷⁹⁾ More vigorous was the pursuit of the second major electoral theme, directed towards exposing the 'irreligious' and 'marxist' tendencies of the NSDAP.¹⁸⁰⁾ The hostile attitude of the Centre Party was effective in preventing serious Nazi inroads into the Catholic population. In the Münster and Paderborn regions, and especially in the Catholic counties of the Sauerland, the Nazis encountered intense opposition from the local population.¹⁸¹⁾ The effectiveness of the Centre Party's anti-Nazi propaganda can be seen in the very poor results secured by the NSDAP in Catholic counties, which fell well below the regional average.¹⁸²⁾

The second 'bloc' preventing Nazi expansion was provided by the parties of the Left, which called the tune in the industrialised regions of the province and blunted Nazi efforts by a forceful and vigorous election campaign.

178) Milatz, op. cit., appendix - map "Reichstagswahl 14 September 1930".

179) Tremonia, 4 August and 8 September 1930; General-Anzeiger, 8 September 1930.

180) Cf. Klotzbach, op. cit., pp.33-34.

181) On this see Beck, op. cit., passim; also Hiemisch, op. cit., p.58.

182) This is underlined by a comparison of three Protestant counties and three Catholic counties with similar social structures in the Regierungsbezirk Minden. The average return of the NSDAP in the three Protestant counties of Halle, Herford and Lübbecke was 29 per cent; the average in the three Catholic counties of Bielefeld, Paderborn and Warburg was 4.6 per cent. Detailed regional election statistics taken from the Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger- und Zeitung, 15 and 16 September 1930.

Of the two socialist parties the SPD found itself in a difficult position in that it had to combat both the extreme Left and the extreme Right. In their election campaign the Social Democrats attacked the NSDAP as the 'main enemy' of Germany, ridiculing its claims of 'socialism' and drawing attention to its reactionary nature.¹⁸³⁾ At the same time a major effort was also directed against the KPD, which was seen as a threat to democracy equal to that posed by the Nazis. The theme of 'enemies all round' dominated the SPD's electoral tactics.¹⁸⁴⁾ The hostility shown by the Social Democrats towards the Communists was reciprocated. In the 1930 campaign the KPD followed electoral tactics dictated by the 'ultra-left' policy adopted by the party leadership in 1928.¹⁸⁵⁾ Its main feature, enforced largely on the German Communists by the dominant influence of the Comintern, was the view that the chief opponent of the KPD was the SPD, and that the SPD and NSDAP were really one and the same. Thus the Westphalian KPD issued a propaganda 'against National and Social Fascism, against trust capitalism and its satellites - the Social Democratic leaders'.¹⁸⁶⁾ The largest gains of the Westphalian KPD, generally at the expense of the SPD, came in the urban centres of the Ruhr, areas which were hit hardest by the economic depression.¹⁸⁷⁾ In both Westphalia-North and -South the SPD lost votes to the KPD, losses which were heavy in some parts of Westphalia-South, where the SPD was displaced

- 183) A whole catalogue of abusive slogans were aimed at the Nazis, described variously as "Idiots in the employ of Capital", "Bait for the Worker", "Also a 'Workers' Party'", "Peculiar Socialists", the "Hope of all Monarchists", "Another form of communist destructive fury" and "The Party of Lies, Murder and War, led by capitalist-feudal reactionaries"; Klotzbach, op. cit., p.33. Cf. Westfälische Allgemeine Volks-Zeitung, 23 July, 25 July and 11 September 1930.
- 184) Reports on SPD meetings in Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger- und Zeitung, 15 and 28 August, 8 September 1930; Westfälische Allgemeine Volks-Zeitung, 23 and 25 July, 11 and 12 September 1930.
- 185) On KPD policies see Bahne, in E. Matthias and R. Morsey, op. cit., pp. 656 ff.. Also Weber, op. cit., pp.239 ff..
- 186) Westfälischer Kämpfer, 28 July, 9 August, 12 August and 1 September 1930.
- 187) On the correlation between high unemployment and KPD success see Kaltefleiter, op. cit., pp.67 ff.. Further H. Bennecke, Wirtschaftliche Depression und politischer Radikalismus. Die Lehre von Weimar, Munich, 1968, pp.47 ff..

as the majority party in the Gelsenkirchen and Ennepe-Ruhr regions. Overall the two socialist parties continued to hold on to the socialist share of the vote in relation to the 1928 election, and the Communists benefited significantly from the increased poll. 188)

The NSDAP secured varying results in different parts of Westphalia. The maximum impact was made in the Protestant rural areas in the north-east and south of the province, areas in which the DNVP had held sway in the 1924 and 1928 elections. In 1930 the Nazi impact in these areas was restricted by two factors. A major competitor for the 'conservative' Protestant rural vote was the Landvolk movement, which continued to hold on in north-eastern Westphalia, especially in County Lübbecke, where it retained its relative majority in 1930 despite the Nazi gains in the county. Another political rival for the Protestant vote also emerged in 1930: the CSVD, which attracted some of the DNVP votes and benefited from the increased poll. The CSVD performed creditably, by its standards, in both Westphalia-North and -South, securing 45,737 votes (3.4 per cent) and 81,630 (5.8 per cent) respectively. 189) Petit-bourgeois in its social structure, and heavily dependent on the female vote, the CSVD became a strong force in the Siegerland and the Minden-Ravensberg area. 190) In County Siegerland the CSVD secured its best result in Germany, polling 32.8 per cent, largely at the expense of the DNVP, which had dominated the county in the 'twenties. In other Protestant communities in Westphalia the party also obtained a number of very good results. 191) The success of the CSVD shows that in 1930 the NSDAP was not yet the automatic choice of 'troubled' Protestant voters.

It would be a mistake to deduce from the results secured by the Nazis in

188) In Westphalia-North the parties combined secured 33.3 per cent in 1928 and 31.1 per cent in 1930; in Westphalia-South the respective figures were 41.1 per cent and 38.3 per cent.

189) Figures taken from Opitz, op. cit., pp.346-347. The returns were better than the results obtained by the DDP, and rivalled those of the DNVP and DVP.

190) Opitz, op. cit., pp.181-182.

191) Ibid., pp.340-341.

Protestant rural areas that the NSDAP was merely a radical version of the DNVP-Landvolk variety. The party did very well in a number of urban centres, both within and outside the Ruhr:

Above the national average	Iserlohn	25.6	
	Minden	23.0	
	Herford	22.1	
	Hagen	21.8	
	Hamm	21.7	
	Ennepe-Ruhr (urbanised)	20.0	
Below national average, but above regional average	Bielefeld	17.6	
Close to regional average	Gelsenkirchen	11.6	
	Mengede	11.1	192)

These results were secured in towns very diverse in size and varying in their socio-economic and religious composition. Creditable performances were attained in towns in which the odds were theoretically very much against the NSDAP because of the powerful working class parties (such as Hagen, Hamm, Bielefeld and Gelsenkirchen).

Overall the NSDAP returns in Westphalia confirm the observations made elsewhere, namely that the movement was most effective in engaging the voter in rural, Protestant areas, and of the middle class in medium sized towns (such as Iserlohn, Herford, Minden in the Westphalian case).¹⁹³⁾ In the Westphalian area, however, the success of the Nazis in a number of industrialised, urban areas, points to the need for a revision of the view that the NSDAP failed to make much impact on the working class voter. Given the social make-up of the region, and the determination of the Gauleitung to cultivate working class support, the success of the Nazis lay largely in the hands of the 'proletariat'. By 1930 some success was recorded by the Nazis, not only

192) The percentages were calculated from figures taken from the Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger- und Zeitung, 15 and 16 September 1930.

193) On the rural voting trends see C.P. Loomis and J.A. Beegle, op. cit., pp.724 ff.; Stoltenberg, op. cit., pp.163 ff.; Noakes, op. cit., pp.152-154. Cf. the analysis by E.-A. Roloff, 'Wer wählte Hitler? Thesen zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Weimarer Republik', Politische Studien, 15, 1964, pp.293-300; K. O'Lessker, 'Who voted for Hitler? A New Look at the Class Basis of Nazism', The American Journal of Sociology, 74, 1968, pp.63-69; J.K. Pollock, 'An Areal Study of the German Electorate, 1930-1933', The American Political Science Review, 1944, pp.89-95.

in the votes obtained in the September election, but also in the comparatively high percentage of workers in the party. The question now was whether or not the National Socialists could extend their base in this direction, for lack of continued growth in the large urban centres would doom the party to play a secondary role in regional politics.

Chapter 9: THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE NSDAP, 1931-1932

Organisational developments in Gaue Westphalia-North and -South.

The division of Gau Westphalia into the Gau Westphalia-North and -South in January 1931 completed the process of the redrawing of the Gau boundaries to correspond with the boundaries of the Reichstag electoral districts first set in motion by the Parteileitung in 1928. The initiative for the division came from Gauleiter Wagner, who towards the end of 1930 decided on a division of his Gau into two Untergaue, over which he would continue to enjoy full control. The decision was prompted by a desire to construct a more efficient regional organisation, necessitated by the influx of new party members in 1930. 1) The proposed reorganisation, though passed to the Parteileitung for consideration, was implemented before Munich's attitudes were known. It was on Wagner's authority that the district leader of Bielefeld, Homann, took over Untergau Westphalia-North. Wagner's independent action, his attempt to retain control in Westphalia, and his appointment of Homann as Gauleiter, met with failure as the Parteileitung intervened to assert its central control. The concept of the division of Westphalia was agreed to by Strasser, but not the way in which Wagner had tried to operate. On Strasser's advice, Hitler appointed Dr Meyer, district leader of Gelsenkirchen, as provisional Gauleiter of Westphalia-North, the 'final transfer of the Gau being deferred by one year or more', a probationary period during which Meyer had the chance to prove his ability. 2) The problems involved in the reorganisation were sorted out at a conference in Hamm on 4 January 1931, at which the boundaries of Gau Westphalia-North and -South were defined. In accordance with the 'electoral district principle' a number of boundary changes were settled with the adjacent Gau Hanover-Süd-Braunschweig, including the transfer of the Land Lippe-Detmold

1) "Lagebericht 4", police report, Bielefeld, January 1931: SAD MI IP/625.

2) G. Strasser to Wagner, Munich, 24 December 1930; Strasser to Meyer, Munich, 24 December 1930: BAK NS 22/1076.

by the latter to the new Gau Westphalia-North.

Meyer faced a number of problems following the creation of the new Gau.⁴⁾ One major difficulty was the low membership of the Nazi Party in northern Westphalia. At the time of the division the paid-up membership of the Westphalian section which he took over numbered 4,256, organised in 115 branches.⁵⁾ The strength of the party was unequally distributed. Just over one-third of the membership, and 40 per cent of the branches, were concentrated in the district of Bielefeld. In the Catholic areas of the Gau the party had hardly established itself. The geographically extensive districts of Münster, Paderborn and Rheine, contained only a handful of small branches; Münster had only 4 branches with a total membership of 274; Paderborn numbered a mere 169 members distributed among 10 branches. The relatively low membership had to carry an extensive party bureaucracy, which was rapidly constructed in the spring of 1931. The development of the Gau apparatus presented its own problems. At its formation the Gauleitung consisted of only six functionaries: the Gauleiter, Gau business manager and treasurer, party auditor, Gau Uschla chairman, propaganda leader, and Hitler Youth leader.⁶⁾ In the course of 1931 the Gau leadership expanded rapidly to reflect the horizontal organization typical of the more established Gaue. By the end of the year, excluding the Gauleiter and SA leader, the Gauleitung consisted of 18 officials controlling 18 departments.⁷⁾ Many of these officials were men of comparatively little experience, for the bulk of the experienced personnel of

3) Meyer to Strasser, Gelsenkirchen-Buer, 5 January 1931: BAK NS 22/1075.

4) Alfred Meyer, born 5.10.1891 at Göttingen. Abitur 1911. Studied law at Lausanne. Officer during World War One; prisoner of war 1917. Had reached the rank of Captain by the time of his demobilisation. Secured doctorate 1922. Employed as Zechenbeamter in Gelsenkirchen. Joined NSDAP 1928; party number 28,738. Branch leader of Gelsenkirchen and district leader of Enscher-Lippe. 1930 MdR; 1931 deputy in Prussian Landtag. 1933 Reichsstatthalter of Lippe and Lippe-Schaumburg; 1938 Oberpräsident of Westphalia. Committed suicide 1945.

5) For the following "Statistik Gau Westfalen-Nord", probably spring 1931 covers period 1.1.1931 to 1.6.1931: copy in SAD MI IP/607.

6) Schröder, op. cit., p.16.

7) Full list of these contained in "Gaurundschreiben Nr. 15", Gelsenkirchen, 20 November 1931 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

Gau Westphalia was retained by Gau Westphalia-South at the time of the division. As a consequence the Gauleitung was not very efficient. The impression of Reichsorganisations-Inspekteur Ley at the first Gau conference of Westphalia-North was that the party organisation was of a lower standard than that of the older, established Gaue. 8)

Apart from the difficulties involved in the construction of the Gau apparatus, Meyer also had to face a problem which had worried Wagner towards the end of 1930, namely opposition within the party caused in part by the Otto Strasser crisis in the summer of 1930. 9) The split between Strasser and Hitler created some unrest, primarily in the branches situated in north-eastern Westphalia. Wagner had dealt with this by wholesale expulsions of refractory party members and the dissolution of a number of branches in which opposition sentiments were particularly strong. 10) Hardest hit by these internal disputes were the large branches of Bielefeld, Herford and Minden. The opposition appears to have been motivated less by ideological support for Otto Strasser and more by ill will towards, and jealousy of, branch and district leaders. The major complaint of the disaffected Nazis was about the 'boss rule' in the party. Few of those expelled joined O. Strasser's 'Kampfgemeinschaft revolutionärer National Sozialisten', which failed to take root even in the areas of major unrest. 11) Dissolved branches re-emerged in the spring of 1931 with memberships composed of those who had formerly been expelled. 12) The unrest did not affect party functionaries above the branch level. The sole exception was the editor of the

8) "Bericht über den Gaustag Westfalen in Münster", by Ley (January 1932) copy in BAK NS 22/1075.

9) For the background see Kühnl, op. cit., p.248 ff.; also Hüttenberger, op. cit., pp.53 ff..

10) "Lagebericht Nr. 4", police report, Bielefeld, January 1931: SAD MI IP/625. Hüttenberger notes that the Strasser crisis cost Gau Ruhr (which no longer existed) some 1,500 to 2,000 members. Evidence for this is hard to find in the case of Westphalia. See Hüttenberger, op. cit., p.53.

11) See the report on the Kampfgemeinschaft revolutionärer NS by the police, Bielefeld, 20 March 1931: SAD MI IP/606.

12) Police reports, Bielefeld, 8 December 1930: SAD MI IP/606; and 12 January 1931: SAD MI IP/607.

Westfälischer Beobachter (a regional Nazi paper printed in Herford and distributed in the Minden-Ravensberg region), who was dismissed from his post. ¹³⁾ Since the bulk of the expelled members continued to look to Hitler as their party leader, and demanded to be allowed to re-enter the party, the Gauleitung of Westphalia-North was well placed to solve the problem. Provided that the expelled members paid their missed membership dues, they were allowed back into the fold. ¹⁴⁾ By April 1931 the unrest had died down, and 'complete peace reigned in all the branches'. ¹⁵⁾ Significantly the Stennes affair in the spring of 1931 hardly affected the Westphalian region.

Though the Gauleitung of Westphalia-North succeeded in quelling the unrest, the disharmony within the Gau at its formation was a serious embarrassment to Meyer engaged, as he was, in asserting his authority over the regional movement. It was just as well for him that Homann, whom he 'replaced', did not use the unrest in an area which formed the basis of his Hausmacht to make further difficulties for the new Gauleiter. Meyer's appointment of Homann to the position of Gauorganisationsleiter of Westphalia-North probably appeased the latter, and the two 'worked hand in hand'. ¹⁶⁾ Tactically it was an astute move by Meyer, who won over a well-known regional figure, a man fully aware of the party situation in the Gau and one who had proved his organisational skills by creating the most successful district in northern Westphalia.

The years 1931 and 1932 saw a continuation of the expansion of the NSDAP in Westphalia. Between September 1930 and January 1933 Gau Westphalia-South attracted 20,514 new members, which brought the total party membership to 24,214. In the same period Gau Westphalia-North recorded an increase of 14,467 members, giving it a total membership of 16,546. ¹⁷⁾ These increases

- 13) "Lagebericht 4", police report, Bielefeld, January 1931: SAD MI IP/625.
 14) Police report, Bielefeld, 20 March 1931: SAD MI IP/606.
 15) "Lagebericht 5", police report, Bielefeld, 20 May 1931: SAD MI IP/625.
 16) Meyer to Strasser, Gelsenkirchen-Buer, 13 February 1931: BAK NS 22/1075.
 17) Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.26. These figures are lower than those given on a list drawn up in 1933, which gave Gau Westphalia-South a membership of 29,771 on 30 January 1933, and Gau Westphalia-North 19,341 - list contained in BAK Sammlung Schumacher 376.

were relatively small compared to the general growth rate in other Gaue, and both Westphalian Gaue had fewer members in proportion to their population than most of the other 30 Nazi Gaue. 18)

The membership increases were important in easing the financial strains imposed on the rank and file by an expanding party bureaucracy, the creation of a regional party press, and the numerous election campaigns of 1932. Of great importance to the Westphalian Nazis was the growth in the number of supporters organised in the Freiheitsbund. This organisation flourished in 1931-32, and was particularly strong in the Bielefeld, Dortmund and Bochum regions. 19) The Bielefeld district alone had fifteen branches by 1932. 20) The organisation enjoyed support from 'doctors, lawyers, and professional people employed in industry and business', some of whom contributed considerable sums to the NSDAP. Individual monthly contributions in Dortmund ranged from 50 RM to 120 RM. 21) Due to the secrecy which surrounded membership, the total membership of the Freiheitsbund is impossible to determine. In the Hamm region the organisation was estimated to contain 300 to 400 members; in Bielefeld it had 60 members, and in Paderborn 30. 22) Even at 5 RM per head per month the income derived from this source would have been quite substantial. Certainly the flow of funds from these hidden sources did much to alleviate the financial situation of the party. The money was used for 'covering debts in branch budgets and for financing more extensive propaganda'. The funds were also important in the 'furnishing and running of SA-Homes', which were a common feature in party branches by the early nineteen-thirties. 23) The income

18) In terms of the membership strength of the 32 Gaue, Westphalia-South was placed 22nd and Westphalia-North 28th - Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.27.

19) Police report, Bochum, 24 December 1931: SAM 67 - Bd. 3.

20) Police report, Bielefeld, 27 May 1932: SAD MI IP/522.

21) Report by the Regierungspräsident Arnsberg, 30 October 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

22) Police report, Bielefeld, 27 December, 1932: SAD MI IP/522.

23) For this and the following see police report, Bochum, 24 December 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

derived from the Freiheitsbund was jealously guarded by the branch leaders, who considered the funds to be branch property. In many cases even the district leaders were not informed of the total income derived from this source. At a district meeting held in Bielefeld on 25 October 1931, for example, one answer given by a branch leader to the district leaders' question about the total sum collected through the Freiheitsbund was 'that he did not wish to divulge any information on this since it would only lead to greater financial demands being made on his branch by the district leader; he could use the money for propaganda purposes himself'.

The general developments of both Westphalian Gaue in the years 1931 and 1932 show marked similarities to those recorded in the two previous years. The basic pattern of party operation was relatively firm by 1931. The intensity of effort, the type of propaganda style, the organisational principles and the structure of the Gau administration remained practically unchanged. Refinements in the vertical organisational structure of the Gauleitung, such as the replacement of the district leader by Kreisleiter in the course of 1931-32, were in line with national developments. The imitation and utilisation of propaganda techniques employed by rival parties also continued. Thus the example provided by the KPD's Agitpropgruppen prompted the Gauleitung Westphalia-South to develop a number of Spielscharen, whose function it was to 'entertain visitors to Nazi meetings through one-act plays emphasising National Socialist ideas'. 24) Since the Communist press regularly announced the names of former Nazis who joined the KPD, the Gauleitung Westphalia-North thought it useful to use this propaganda method in reverse. Party branches were asked to report the number of former Communists who entered the NSDAP. They were especially asked to provide 'favourable comments made by these new party comrades, which should emphasize their reasons for changing their allegiance, which could then be used for propaganda purposes'. 25) Much greater emphasis was also placed in

24) Police reports, Bochum, 6 and 19 February 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 2.

25) "Rundschreiben der GL W-N", 22 November 1931 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

the early nineteen-thirties on the acquisition of 'political intelligence', both on the party's own activities as well as that of its rivals. The impetus for this development came from the Reichsleitung in 1931. From 1931 monthly reports were dutifully produced by the Gauleitung, which issued special forms to the district leaders on which to record the major activities of the party in the area under their control, the propaganda activities of the opposition parties (including copies of pamphlets distributed by them), and suggestions concerning propaganda suitable for their areas. ²⁶⁾ The activity reports compiled by the Westphalian Gau propaganda departments indicate the continuation of the characteristics of Nazi agitation in force by the late nineteen-twenties: a mass of meetings and party activity in all parts of the Gaue which overshadowed the efforts of all the opposition parties combined. ²⁷⁾

One party development which merits special consideration in the period 1931 to 1933 is the creation of a regional Nazi press. Compared to its major political rivals, the NSDAP did not possess an influential party press until 1933. ²⁸⁾ In Westphalia the construction of a regional press was initiated by Wagner in the course of 1930. The initial reluctance to construct an independent Westphalian Gau paper was due to the lack of finance and suitable personnel. Also, it was felt, an independent Westphalian Gau paper might lead to the end of Die Neue Front (Terboven's Essen publication which was distributed in Westphalia). The collapse of this paper had to be avoided at all costs since it might undermine party morale. ²⁹⁾ Wagner's reluctance to venture into the press world may also have been influenced by his first efforts

26) "An die BL der NSDAP Gau W-S", Gaupropagandaleiter, Bochum, 14 February 1931 - copy in SAM - 67 Bd. 2. Cf. the "Sonderrundschreiben Gau W-S", Bochum, 2 November 1931 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

27) Cf. the example given in Schröder, op. cit., pp.56-65.

28) Pridham points out that by 1933 the Nazis controlled only 121 papers out of a total of 4,703 papers published in Germany. The Nazi publications had a circulation of circa 1 million. Pridham, op. cit., p.244.

29) This consideration was voiced at the district leaders meeting in Dortmund in February 1930 - copy of the report in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

with the Westfälischer Beobachter, a weekly which appeared in Herford from July 1929. By February 1930 it had run up a debt of 6,800 Marks.³⁰⁾ What finally persuaded the Nazis to develop a regional press in Westphalia was the belief that any major political movement had to have one.³¹⁾ After the election breakthrough of September 1930, and the increase in party membership in the latter half of that year, Wagner thought it appropriate to bring out a Gau paper, which he thought would be useful in furthering the 'organisational and spiritual unity of the Gauleitung and the individual party member'.³²⁾ The new paper, the Westfalenwacht, appeared from 1 October 1930. A weekly, it was published in Bochum and edited by the Gaupropagandaleiter Dr Piclum. At first it had a print order of 8,000, which rose to 15,000 by February 1931.³³⁾ By February 1931 the moderate success of the Westfalenwacht encouraged the Gauleitung to bring out a daily paper, the Rote Erde. This developed into the chief publication of Gau Westphalia-South (it was also distributed in the southern parts of Gau Westphalia-North), with a print order which increased from 8,000 to 20,000 between February 1931 and January 1933.³⁴⁾ The Westfalenwacht continued to be published for distribution in the rural areas and was written accordingly.³⁵⁾ The Rote Erde was aimed primarily at the working class. Eighty per cent of its readership were manual workers (Handarbeiter). Its language was 'simple and crude so that the Volk could understand it'.³⁶⁾ In the course of 1931 a number of additional local and regional papers were also founded in the Westphalian Gaue. In southern Westphalia the Siegessänder Nationalzeitung first emerged in October 1931, which served the Siegen and Wittgenstein area. The paper struggled for survival until 1933, with a circulation fluctuating between 900 and 2,000.³⁷⁾ Gau Westphalia-North was

30) Schröder, op. cit., p.80.

31) Beck, op. cit., p.87.

32) Thus the "Rundschreiben der Gaupropagandaleitung", Bochum, 10 September 1930 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

33) "Die NS-Presse in Gau Westfalen-Süd": HA 49/1157.

34) Westfälische Landeszeitung "Rote Erde": HA 49/1157.

35) "Westfalenwacht" - report in HA 49/1159.

36) Beck, op. cit., pp.90 and 95.

37) A brief history of the paper is given in "NS-Presse: Siegesländer Nationalzeitung" in HA 48/1067.

initially served by the Westfälischer Beobachter, and its two local editions, the Bielefelder Beobachter and the Herforder Beobachter. These had a circulation of 2,000 and were insignificant when compared to the 100 or so newspapers printed in northern Westphalia, which had a combined circulation of 500,000. 38) Three other local papers which also appeared in northern Westphalia in the course of 1931 and 1932, namely the Lippische Kurier, Die Schaumburg and Der Filter, all suffered from lack of subscribers until the co-ordination of the regional press in the Gleichschaltung of 1933 led to a rapid increase in their readership. 39)

The lack of success of the Nazi press in Westphalia lay basically in the nature of the papers produced by the party. They were not newspapers in the accepted sense of the word. Even the largest, the Rote Erde, was little more than 'a daily street pamphlet'. 40) The news content of the Nazi papers was very limited and objectivity in reporting was lacking 'as a matter of policy'. Their purpose was to further the political struggle of the NSDAP. They were not designed to replace the daily papers previously taken by the party members. 41) Technically the papers were of poor quality, the print was bad and mistakes abounded. Even the party members constantly complained about their low quality. The loyalty of the readership was tested further by the irregularity of their appearance. Crude attacks on the State, politicians, political parties, regional and local personalities especially disliked by the Nazis, as well as sensational reports of Jewish 'ritual murders' and so on, led to a series of prohibitions. The Rote Erde, for example, had one of the worst records in this respect. Between April 1931 and April 1932 it was banned six times, for a total of 17 weeks, a 'record' exceeded nationally by only one other Nazi paper, the Westdeutscher Beobachter. 42)

38) Schröder, op. cit., p.75.

39) Ibid., pp.81 ff..

40) Beck, op. cit., p.88.

41) For this and the following see Beck, op. cit., pp.86 ff.; also Schröder, op. cit., pp.75 ff..

42) Beck, op. cit., p.90.

The appeal of Nazi publications was small. Even the committed party member had to be cajoled into supporting them. 43) The simple expedient of sending each branch a fixed quota, regardless of whether there was any demand for the papers, was used to get rid of each edition. 44) The branches tried to sell as many copies as possible chiefly for financial reasons. The Westfalenwacht, for example, which cost 20 Pf., was sold to the branches at half price. 45) Few branches could make such profit in practice, however, since most failed to sell their quota. The poor economic climate of the time, which led even established papers to struggle for survival, was not propitious for the launching of the Nazi papers.

The role played by the regional Nazi press was a minor one. The papers were used for propaganda purposes, especially at election time, when special issues suitable for house to house propaganda were provided to branches at a cut price. The papers did act as a channel of communication between the Gauleitung and party members and announcements and general information were distributed daily through the publications. It is fairly certain that outside the party the Nazi papers had few regular readers and hardly any significance.

One feature of the national development of the NSDAP which is particularly striking in the early nineteen-thirties is the expansion of specialist organisations within the movement. By 1930 a number of organisations existed alongside the political organisation. Apart from the SA and the SS, founded by the party, there were seven further organisations founded by private initiative. These had all been officially acknowledged as 'National Socialist' by Hitler, and integrated into the movement. 46) As the party expanded in the

43) Schröder notes in his account of the history of the regional Nazi press that 'no party member would want to read such papers again, never mind pay for them also'; Schröder, op. cit., p.75.

44) The Bochum district alone had to get rid of one-third of the first issues of the Westfalenwacht - police report, Bochum, 3 October 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

45) The financial advantages to be gained by party branches in selling as many papers as possible were outlined in a circular by the Gau propaganda department in September 1930 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1.

46) The organisations were the NSDStB, the Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur, the Deutscher Frauenorden "Rotes Hakenkreuz", the DNSDJ, the NSLB, the NS Ärztebund, and the NSS.

early 'thirties, these organisations grew in size and importance and were joined by a number of other specialist organisations developed to attract specific economic and professional interests. Existing organisations emerged from the obscurity which had surrounded them in the late nineteen-twenties. The specialist organisations were not only engaged in the political struggle, they were increasingly charged with preparing the party for the various tasks it would face once it secured power. Of the new organisations the ApA and the NSBO were by far the most significant.

The specialist organisations were important in facilitating the party's rise to power. ⁴⁷⁾ They allowed the Nazis to permeate a number of professional associations, and they were instrumental in removing from the bourgeois parties much of their social and financial support. For the NSDAP specialist departments furnished the movement with expert information which helped it in its 'struggle' for power. The various organisations also allowed the party to overcome more easily the problems confronting it in 1933. On the negative side, the sheer number of specialist organisations threatened the party with over-bureaucratisation. The burden placed on the party member, often enrolled in several organisations at the same time, also increased. The problems of defining the respective areas of competence of the various organisations, as well as their relationship to the party organisation on the local and regional levels, were difficult to solve. The tendency towards 'empire building' undermined the unity of the party. The scramble for influence and power within an increasingly successful party resulted in a marked increase in Pöstchenjägeri. In the Westphalian NSDAP in the nineteen-thirties it led to much jealousy, bitterness and disruption. Long serving party members were pushed aside by the new 'experts' who secured positions for themselves in the various specialist organisations.

47) For the following see Noakes, op. cit., pp.163-164.

Few of the many specialist organisations had much significance in Westphalia in the pre-1933 period. Professional organisations such as the NSLB, the DNSJB, the NS-Ärztebund and the NS-Beamtenabteilung made little headway before the removal of their non-Nazi rivals in 1933. 48) The degree of support enjoyed by the NSLB, for example, was negligible. In southern Westphalia the first branch was founded as late as November 1931. By 1933 the organisation existed in only 12 of the 22 Kreise in which Gau Westphalia-South was divided, with a total membership of 326. 49)

A similar picture emerges if one looks at the Nazi youth organisations. Attempts to interest youths in Nazism had a long history in the province. The first Nazi orientated organisation, the NS-Jugendbewegung founded in the early nineteen-twenties, had established a branch in Dortmund in November 1922. 50) The NS-Jugendbewegung's successor, the HJ, was founded in 1925 on the initiative of Kurt Gruber. Called the Grossdeutsche Jugendbewegung at first, it assumed the familiar HJ title at the party congress in Weimar in July 1926. The first Westphalian branch was founded in Bochum towards the end of 1927, to be followed by a number of further groups scattered throughout the province. These early branches were extremely small with memberships which did not reach the double figure mark. 51) Progress of the HJ was restricted due to the opposition of the schools and churches. Some impetus was given to the HJ after the growth of the NSDAP in 1930 and 1931, party members being encouraged to enrol their children in the movement. By October 1931 the Westphalian HJ numbered 922. The organisation was largely confined to southern Westphalia, Gau Westphalia-North having only 188 members. 52) Given the slow growth of the HJ, the call by Gauleiter Loewer in 1932 to enrol as quickly as possible

48) Beck, op. cit., pp.173 ff..

49) On the history of the NSLB in Gau W-3 see Der National Sozialistische Erzieher, Sonderausgabe: "Sechs Jahre NSLB in Gau Westfalen-Süd", April/Mai 1937; further Beck, op. cit., pp.190-192.

50) "Bericht 11: Landesverbände der NS-Jugendbewegung", (n.d.): copy in HA 18/333.

51) Beck, op. cit., pp.172-173.

52) "HJ Zusammenstellung für Oktober 1931" - list in HA 18/344.

'10,000 youths in Gau Westphalia-South to fight for the idea of Adolf Hitler' was absurdly optimistic. ⁵³⁾ The NSS, a department added to the HJ towards the end of 1930, also failed to elicit much response. ⁵⁴⁾ In Gau Westphalia-South it had a strength of 368 by the end of 1931. The organisation had 18 branches, most of which were very small. Even in large towns, such as Bochum, Dortmund and Hagen, the memberships were low, 35, 30 and 20 respectively. ⁵⁵⁾ In part the weakness of the NSS is related to the lack of support enjoyed by the NSLB. Few teachers in Westphalia showed much sympathy for the NSDAP, yet it was on the 'unobtrusive propaganda of teachers organised in the NSLB' that the NSS primarily depended. ⁵⁶⁾ Most of the little support enjoyed by the NSS came from the grammar school sector; in the Mittelschulen and Volksschulen there was hardly any response. ⁵⁷⁾

Of all the specialist organisations of the NSDAP the SA was by far the most important in the Kampfzeit period. In the early nineteen-thirties the Westphalian SA grew with the party. By November 1931 the recorded strength of the Westphalian SA was 8,020. ⁵⁸⁾ As is true of all the other party organisations, the main strength of the SA lay in southern Westphalia (5,558 members), an area in which it grew rapidly in 1931 and 1932. Between October 1931 and January 1932 the SA increased its membership by some 50 per cent, from 5,102 to 7,795. ⁵⁹⁾ Between November 1931 and July 1932 the SA in both Gaue more than doubled, to reach a total of 18,743. ⁶⁰⁾

⁵³⁾ "Rundschreiben 2/32", (N.D.); copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

⁵⁴⁾ In parts of Lower Saxony the NSS did comparatively well - see Noakes, op. cit., pp.193 ff..

⁵⁵⁾ "NSS Gau Westfalen-Süd. Bestand 1930-1931." Copy in HA 18/344.

⁵⁶⁾ Police report, Bielefeld, 15 July 1932: SAD MI IP/611 Bd. 8. Police report on "Monatskonferenz der OGF und Unterführer des NS Schülerbundes, Bezirk Dortmund 29 November 1931", Dortmund, 23 December 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

⁵⁷⁾ Police report, Dortmund, 23 December 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3; police report, Minden, 20 July 1932 and police report, Bielefeld, 15 July 1932: SAD MI IP/611 Bd. 8. Cf. the report on the NSS in Minden in Mindener Zeitung, 24 June 1932.

⁵⁸⁾ Report by Police President, Bochum, 2 December 1931: SAD MI IP/521.

⁵⁹⁾ "OSAF Betr. Stand der SA nach dem Stande der letzten Stärkemeldung", two reports dated 15 December 1931 and 1 February 1932 in HA 17/307.

⁶⁰⁾ "OSAF Stand der SA", 1 September 1932: BAK Sammlung Schumacher 415.

For the Westphalian NSDAP the strength of the SA continued to be the crucial factor in the conduct of its operations, especially in view of the increasing power of anti-fascist organisations which confronted the party by the early nineteen-thirties. In southern Westphalia alone the two major anti-Nazi organisations, the Communist Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus and the SPD inspired Reichsbanner had 11,993 and 9,931 members respectively by November 1931. ⁶¹⁾ Both of these organisations were actively engaged in meeting the Nazi 'threat'. This is reflected most clearly in the increase of violence. Between 1930 and 1932 the Dortmund area alone witnessed around 100 serious incidences involving loss of life and serious injuries as a result of political differences between the Nazis and left-wing supporters. ⁶²⁾ Without its quasi-military organisation the NSDAP would have found it impossible to operate, especially in the larger urban centres where the Left was highly organised and strongly supported.

Fortunately for the Nazis the Westphalian NSDAP was spared the damaging conflicts between the party and the SA which occurred elsewhere. ⁶³⁾ There is evidence of only one serious confrontation, which temporarily threatened the stability of the Hagen NSDAP in 1931. Here the branch leader and SA leader came into conflict concerning their respective powers: the clash was worsened by the personal antipathy of the men concerned. ⁶⁴⁾ Barring such isolated squabbles, a relatively harmonious relationship existed between the party and the SA. This may be explained in part by the good relationship which existed between the Westphalian Gauleiter and the SA leadership, and the determination by the Gauleitung, to quote Meyer, 'to ensure a smooth co-operation between the

61) Report by Police President, Bochum, 2 December 1931: SAD MI IP/521.

62) The incidences are listed in material collected by the Gestapo, Dortmund, 16 May 1938: HA 26/522.

63) See Horn on the Stennes and Stegmann affairs, Horn, op. cit., pp.409 ff.; on the regional level, see Noakes, pp.184-185; Schön, op. cit., pp.128 ff.; and Pridham, op. cit., pp.298 ff..

64) OGL Theiler to DL Vetter, Hagen, 4 May 1931; Vetter to Strasser, Hagen, 12 May 1931: BAK NS 22/1076.

Gauleitung and the SAF'. ⁶⁵⁾ The fact that Schepmann, SAF for Westphalia, was a close friend of both the Westphalian party leaders, is also of importance. His appointment in 1931 was the result of the efforts of Meyer, who thought that the Munich candidate for the position, a man called Apfelstaedt, was unsuitable for Westphalia. ⁶⁶⁾

The friction which existed within the Westphalian NSDAP tended to come from within the political organisation itself. The organisational developments of both Gaue were punctuated by dissent and confrontation. The periodic clashes between the Gauleiter and their subordinates show that the Führerprinzip was still not fully appreciated by branch and district leaders, who challenged its implications on a number of occasions. At the grassroots the dictatorial authority vested in the Gau and district leaders could meet with strong opposition on points of organisational principle which had been clarified, theoretically at least, in the late nineteen-twenties. Thus the party members of the Detmold branch protested against the appointment of a new branch leader by the district leader in 1931 on the grounds that in their branch the party members had traditionally elected the branch leader. ⁶⁷⁾

The patronage concentrated in the hands of the Gauleiter, district leader and Kreisleiter was a source of friction. Local party leaders felt that their interests were being ignored in favour of those members of the cliques which surrounded the Gauleiter. Several accusations by branch leaders that their removal from office was motivated by 'the desire of the Gauleiter' to further the 'political ambitions of their friends' are recorded. ⁶⁸⁾ The conflict between Gauleiter Wagner and district leader of Dortmund, in the spring of 1932, is illustrative of the kind of tension which existed within the party. Wagner's motive in dividing König's district into two (Bezirke Dortmund and

⁶⁵⁾ Meyer to Röhm, Gelsenkirchen-Buer, 31 March 1931: BAK NS 22/1076.

⁶⁶⁾ Ibid.; cf. Strasser to Meyer, Munich, 20 May 1931: BAK NS 22/1076.

⁶⁷⁾ Letter of complaint by K. Siedke to Strasser, Detmold, 19 May 1931: BAK NS 22/1075.

⁶⁸⁾ Cf. Dr Fuhrmann's objection to his removal - Fuhrmann, OGL of Hiddessen to GL Meyer, Hiddessen, 18 June 1932: BAK NS 22/1075.

Hamm), appeared to König to be an attempt to find a post for Wagner's personal friend Stürtz, the deputy Gauleiter of Westphalia-South. It was Stürtz who was designated by Wagner to replace König in Dortmund. The latter was to take over the Hamm district, a backwater in comparison with the Dortmund area. The diminution of his status was bitterly resented by König, who contested the decision forcefully. In the acrimonious correspondence which followed it is clear that König's opposition to Wagner's action was not unaffected by personal interest. 69) In a letter to Strasser he implied that his past services to the movement should be acknowledged and rewarded. He expected a "return" for his services, not a reduction in his party position: 'In view of my twelve years of service to our party, of which I assume the leaders of our NSDAP, including our Führer, are cognizant, I cannot believe that the action taken against me by party comrade Wagner will be allowed to pass unchallenged. That I cannot accept the degradation is understandable. No one can suppose that I will relinquish my post, at which I have sacrificed my blood, sweat and family wealth for the NSDAP and at which I have been repeatedly attacked by political opponents and reduced to a cripple, in order to continue my activities in some lonely little place.' 70)

König was but one of many of the "old fighters" of the movement who expected some reward at a time of increasing success for the party. His dispute with Wagner was two-dimensional. Not only was his ambition to lead Dortmund into the Third Reich frustrated by Wagner's organisational changes, but his aggressive attempts to secure a Reichstag or Landtag mandate were also being blocked by Wagner. 71) The net result of König's Pöstchenjagen was a sharp rebuke from Strasser and a steady deterioration in König's position. He lacked servility and failed to comprehend how the party was organised under

69) The correspondence between König, Wagner and the PL is contained in BAK NS 22/1076.

70) König to Strasser, 7 May 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

71) On the question of the mandates see especially König to Wagner, Dortmund, 3 May 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

the Führerprinzip. In a letter to König, Strasser rebuked him for his attitude towards his Gauleiter, 'which lacks the necessary discipline demanded of a National Socialist'. 72)

The desire for advancement is understandable. The growth of the NSDAP in 1931 and 1932 opened new possibilities which had not been there in the 'twenties. The idealism of the "old fighters" was increasingly tempered by material considerations. The case of Irrgang, another long-serving party member, also illustrates the attitudes and motives behind the scramble for positions. Writing to Strasser in 1932 he lamented the fact that 'in the coming Reichstagswahl I have been placed in a hopeless position ... I have worked for years in the hope that one day I would be in the position of working for the movement without experiencing financial difficulties. My political position in Bielefeld is such that it is unbearable for me to be placed behind party comrades who are recent recruits to the party and virtually unknown to the public at large.' 73)

It appears from the two cases cited that under the Führerprinzip the key factor for advancement lay in one's relationship with regional party superiors, especially the Gauleiter, who determined success or failure. In the nineteen-thirties long service was no longer a guarantee of advancement. König's broadsides against Wagner merely led to his removal.

The jostling for posts and preferment, although it could temporarily undermine party work in serious disputes, gave the Gauleiter an important weapon with which to keep the more ambitious elements in line. König could have availed himself of a substitute "bribe" offered to him by Wagner in his dispute in 1932 (a Gaukommissar position in return for obedience) had it not been for König's high ambitions. 74) There were numerous jobs available to placate

72) Strasser to König, Munich, 31 May 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

73) Irrgang (Gaufachberater für Kommunalpolitik) to Strasser, Bielefeld, 4 July 1932: BAK NS 22/1075.

74) Wagner to König, Bochum, 7 May 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

restless elements, especially in 1931 and 1932 when the introduction of the Kreisleiter position opened the way for lower party officials to move up in the hierarchy. The Gauleiter was also in a much stronger position vis-à-vis his subordinates because of the Parteileitung's rigid adherence to the principle of non-involvement in Gau affairs. Those party members who turned directly to the Parteileitung with complaints against regional party officials were told to conform with the accepted rule in force within the party, namely to complain to their immediate superior and not to the Parteileitung. 75) More often than not direct contact with party headquarters by complainants was deemed a sign of opposition or indiscipline, and brusquely rejected. Invariably complaints from district or branch leaders were passed on to the Gauleitung. This was a standard practice since, as Strasser pointed out to the branch leader of Hagen (who had complained about the local SA leader), 'a branch leader is not accountable to me or Adolf Hitler, but only to the Gauleiter'. 76)

The major limitation on the dictatorial power exercised by the Gauleiter was the right of any member to appeal to the party Uschla if he was expelled from the party. This right of appeal was well established by the nineteen-thirties. Wagner, who was prone to expel members at the first sign of trouble and investigate matters afterwards, was thwarted by this practice on several occasions. An example of the problems which could arise if an excluded party member took matters further is provided by the case of Hartstang, branch leader of Wattenscheid. He retaliated against Wagner, who had removed him from his post in the spring of 1930, by rallying local support against the decision, a step which led to his exclusion from the party by the Gau Uschla. 77) Hartstang's appeal against this move to the party Uschla complicated the affair

75) Thus RL I to Irrgang, Munich, 16 July 1932: BAK NS 22/1075.

76) Strasser to Vetter, Munich, 29 September 1931: BAK NS 22/1076.

77) For this and the following see Wagner to Organisationsabteilung I and G. Strasser, Bochum, 19 December 1930; Gau Uschla chairman Dr. Plicun to Reichs-Uschla der NSDAP, Bochum, 21 December 1930: BAK NS 22/1076.

in that Munich queried the decision of the Gau Ushla and ordered another investigation of the case. As a consequence, the Hartstang affair dragged on for most of the year. This gave Hartstang the chance to organise his supporters effectively, which seriously undermined the unity of the local Nazi movement. For Wagner the decision of the party Ushla was damaging, for, as he stated in a letter to the Reichsorganisationsabteilung, such long-drawn out disputes 'fundamentally damaged the discipline of the movement'. Quick action, even if unjust, was preferred by Wagner to long investigations, for long-drawn out disputes invariably leaked out, and were used by the opposition press for propaganda purposes. Schadenfreude of the left-wing press accompanied Nazi squabbles, not only in the case of Hartstang, but similar affairs in other branches. 78)

Not all the local party leaders were obsequious in face of the power wielded by the Gauleiter. The increasing centralisation and bureaucratisation of the party produced some resistance. A minor complaint by the branch leaders was the lack of response to their letters from the Gau headquarters. The expansion of the party, and the increase in the number of branches under the Gauleitung's control, presented the administrative staff of the Gau headquarters with a work-load which they were unable to bear. This was particularly noticeable in the case of Gau Westphalia-North, the bureaucracy of which took some time to organise itself efficiently. 79)

District, Kreis and branch leaders objected above all to the reduction of their power to the point at which they were little more than recipients of central directives, stripped of their freedom to react to the demands imposed on them by local conditions. The loss of freedom was felt most severely in consequence of the centralisation of party propaganda. A strong critic of

78) Cf. the case of the dispute between the OGL of Hülls in the Recklinghausen area as interpreted by the local socialist press - Volksfreund (Gelsenkirchen), 19 January 1931; further police report, Recklinghausen, 6 February 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 2.

79) See the complaints by the Kreisleiter of Werne, Kreisleiter Werne to GL, Werne, 23 May and 28 June 1932: BAK NS 22/1075.

this was Kesting, Kreisleiter of Werne, who complained bitterly about the lack of regard shown by the Gauleitung to his local difficulties and about the unrealistic demands imposed on the branches by the Gauleitung. Kesting wanted 'a free hand in his Kreis', as he had always had, and asked to be free from various directives and orders emanating from the Gauleitung. In particular, he wanted more independence in the formulation of propaganda for 'the instructions of the Gau cannot meet the requirements of both the urban and rural population. In the larger towns it is possible to hold a meeting every week. But here this is not feasible.' What irked Kesting was 'the Gau order given at the last conference at Dülmen, held to prepare the party for the presidential election, which stipulated that I would have to hold 20 meetings within the time-span of 12 weeks, 6 of which had to be held in Werne itself. It was clear to me from the start that this was impossible, and that I would be left with the SA as my sole audience in the later meetings.'

Kesting's fears were justified and led him to demand greater autonomy to arrange campaigns suitable to his district: 'If I am to work as Kreisleiter in this district, and if I am to carry the responsibilities imposed on me by my post, then I demand that I have the freedom to determine how I operate. If I do not have any freedom to manoeuvre, then I am not a Kreisleiter, but only a common European who has been given an inappropriate title.' 80)

Kesting was also annoyed by the Gauleitung's habit of demanding payment for unsolicited propaganda material sent to him by Gau headquarters, and by the extra financial demands made on the branches in his area to meet the debts of the Gauleitung. 81)

The incidence of protest by lower party officials, though relatively few in view of the large number of branches and districts, is an indication of the kind of tension created by the authoritarian nature of the Gauleitung

80) Kreisleiter Kesting to GL Meyer, Werne, 7 April 1932: BAK NS 22/1075.

81) Kesting to GL, Werne, 28 June 1932: BAK NS 22/1075.

and its style of operation. Not all the local party leaders were prepared to accept every command of the Gauleitung without protest. In general, however, both Westphalian Gauleiter could depend on the discipline and loyalty of the great bulk of party members and officials in a period during which intense pressure was exerted on the movement. The year 1932 proved especially arduous in view of the presidential, Reichstag and Landtag elections, which tested the strength of the whole party. The intense propaganda effort which accompanied the campaigns, the financial sacrifices which they involved at a time of severe economic crisis, and the increasing violence which accompanied the political struggle, ultimately caused exhaustion. The fact that the desired victory appeared to elude the NSDAP eroded the optimism of the rank and file, as well as the party leaders at all levels. This in turn produced increasing tension within the party. Towards the end of the year the electoral setback of the Reichstag election of November, undermined the conviction of success and the inevitability of a Nazi seizure of power which had sustained the movement in 1931 and 1932.

The Appeal to the Worker: the NSBO.

The establishment of a Nazi 'trade union', the NSBO, on 1 January 1931 was a belated attempt by the Nazis to extend their influence into the ranks of organised labour, entrenched in the socialist, Communist and Christian trade union movements. The attempts of the nineteen-twenties, which involved criticism of labour leaders, the subversion of existing unions by Nazi supporters, and attempts to instil nationalist feelings among the working class by substituting National Socialism for Marxism, had not been successful. Even in Westphalia, where the party secured considerable support from the working class, most workers continued to be the party's most active and bitter opponents. Given the totalitarian nature of the NSDAP, which could not countenance the idea of an important social grouping remaining outside its influence, it is surprising that an officially recognised, national labour organisation did not make its appearance in the NSDAP until January 1931. The major reason

was Hitler's opposition to the formation of a Nazi union movement. It was pressure from the party rank and file which caused him to reconsider his attitude. The realisation by the party leaders in general, after the September election of 1930 had seen the decimation of the bourgeois parties by the NSDAP, that further success lay chiefly in winning voters organised by the left-wing parties, also helped to cause the change of policy.

The initiative in organising the industrial worker came from Gau Berlin, where a quasi-union organisation appeared in the summer of 1928. 82) The factory cells which emerged numbered some 50 by the end of 1928 and were controlled by a central organisation called NSBO. In the course of 1929 and 1930 other Gaue followed the Berlin example and the NSBO gradually developed into the Reichsleitung, producing a new department, the R.B.A. The official status conferred on the organisation stimulated its expansion under the direction of Muchow. At the Gau level regional NSBO departments appeared which directed branch organisations. Along with the SA, the NSBO proved itself one of the most successful specialist organisations and grew rapidly, especially in 1932:

end of 1931	43,000 members	
May 1932	106,000	"
August 1932	170,000	"
January 1933	c.300,000	" 83)

Before 1931 developments in Westphalia lagged far behind those in the progressive Berlin Gau. Although the first cells were established as early as January 1929 at Mengede, little effort was made to develop the cell system. By 1930 a number of factory cells also existed in Hattingen, Dortmund, Recklinghausen and Bochum. 84) These cells were established by local initiative and acted independently of each other. The formation of a Gau NSBO department and centralised control over local cells started only in 1931. 85) It was

82) For the following see Kele, op. cit., pp.149 ff.; also Schumann, op. cit., pp.34 ff..

83) Kele, op. cit., p.170.

84) Police report, Bochum, 4 April 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1; report by the Landrat, Arnsberg, 28 November 1929: HA 86/1612.

85) Beck, op. cit., pp.158-159.

the official party recognition of the NSBO which triggered off a major effort in both Westphalian Gaue. The incentive to create a strong movement as quickly as possible was provided by the determination of the Gauleitung to contest the factory council elections due in the spring of 1931. Success in these elections was imperative as far as the Gauleitung was concerned. District and party organisations were instructed to give maximum support to the nascent NSBO. 86)

In the creation of an effective organisation the Westphalian NSBO suffered from several handicaps. In the first place there was a lack of suitable leaders. The weakness of the newly established Gau organisations, the lack of funds, and the limited support enjoyed by the Nazis in the numerous industrial concerns of the province, forced the NSBO leadership to limit their efforts to those concerns which already employed a considerable number of Nazi party members. The Gau NSBO leaders feared a debacle if the NSBO were to contest all the seats at stake in Westphalian industry. 87) That this fear was not unjustified is indicated by the poor performance of the NSBO in the elections. In the province as a whole the organisation failed to make a wide impact. The performance was patchy despite the fact that lists were only put up in those factories in which some success could be expected. 88) In some areas the NSBO did startlingly well, especially in the iron-ore mining areas of the Siegerland. 89) In the 19 Westphalian coal mines in which they put up their own lists the NSBO secured 13.2 per cent of the vote. In the Westphalian metal industry only 16 concerns had Nazi lists and the NSBO obtained a return of 11.3 per cent. 90) Even presented in this way, the percentages

86) "An alle OG und Bezirke des Gaues W-S der NSDAP", Bochum, 13 February 1931 - copy in SAM VII Bd. 2.

87) Police report, Bochum, 18 February 1931: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 2.

88) Details of the results in "Erfolge der NS Betriebsrätewahlen im Frühjahr 1931", in Arbeitertum, Sonderheft I - copy in HA 15/283. These statistics are inconclusive and difficult to interpret.

89) In one iron-ore mine in the Siegerland the NSBO secured all six seats; in another it secured four of the six seats; cf. Arbeitertum, Sonderheft I, p.24 - copy in HA 15/283.

90) Beck, op. cit., p.161

secured were barely respectable. But they are misleading. Thus the 13.2 per cent of the poll in the coal-mining industry is reduced to 2.5 per cent when the Nazi vote is calculated as a percentage of the total vote cast - a pathetic performance. How these returns compare to results secured in the factory elections of 1930 is impossible to say since the Nazis contested only a small number of seats in a few concerns. ⁹¹⁾ There are, of course, no figures for 1932 since no factory elections were held as a result of a ban imposed by Brüning in December 1931.

The factory elections took place at a time when the NSBO was still in its formative stage and restricted by organisational problems. Another set of statistics, perhaps more meaningful, with which to measure the strength of the Westphalian NSBO concern the growth of its membership. The figures available for 1931 indicate the continued weakness of the organisation and demonstrate how thinly it was spread in the province. By the end of June 1931 Gau Westphalia-North had 190 members organised in 16 NSBO cells; Gau Westphalia-South had 762 members distributed in 47 cells. ⁹²⁾ By October the figures were 226 and 1,649 respectively. ⁹³⁾ The situation of the NSBO improved in 1932, when it penetrated both Gaue more effectively. By January 1933 the NSBO had secured 5,276 members in Westphalia-North, and was particularly strong in the Bielefeld region. ⁹⁴⁾ An equivalent figure for Gau Westphalia-South is lacking, though here, going by past figures, membership must have been appreciably higher; by February 1932 southern Westphalia had an extensive network of cells, with high membership numbers in the mining and metal industries. Two cells in Hagen alone had 800 members. ⁹⁵⁾

91) The results secured in a few factories are very low - see the report by the Police President, Bochum, 4 April 1930: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 1. In some parts of Germany the NSBO did worse in 1931 than it had done in 1930; cf. the examples given by Schön, op. cit., pp.168-169.

92) "R.B.A. Lagebericht Nr. 4", (covers 16.5.-30.6.1931): BAK NS I/258.

93) "R.B.A. Lagebericht Nr. 5", (1.7.-15.10.1931): ibid..

94) Schröder, op. cit., p.343; cf. report on NSBO by police, Bielefeld, 2 December 1932: SAD MI IP/612 Bd. 9.

95) "Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation in der Provinz Westfalen" - report by police, Bochum, 2 February 1932: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3; cf. "Nazizellen in den westfälischen Betrieben", Dortmunder General-Anzeiger, 7 April 1932.

Given the hundreds of thousands of workers in the province, the degree of support marshalled by the NSBO was very small. The overtures to unionised industrial labour were a failure. A variety of factors account for this. In the first place the NSBO failed in its efforts to attract members of rival unions to its meetings. A variety of tricks were used to achieve this end. The favourite ploy was for the NSBO to announce meetings at which their own leaders and those of other unions (usually of the socialist Free Trade Union) would confront each other. The hope that this would attract unionists to such 'spectacles' was not misplaced, and the SPD press repeatedly warned its readers against the tactic.⁹⁶⁾ Where rival trade unionists did appear at NSBO meetings, the relatively unschooled NSBO leaders were often given a thorough examination, while 'the rather primitive diatribes of the NSBO speakers were generally unable to influence Free Trade Union members'.⁹⁷⁾ Other factors which worked against the NSBO was its failure to solve the problems noted earlier. The shortage of suitable leaders remained, and so did the lack of funds.⁹⁸⁾ In 1932 its work was also handicapped by the concentration of the NSDAP on the numerous elections of that year. This deflected party effort away from the NSBO.⁹⁹⁾ The involvement of the NSBO in the election campaigns, moreover, aggravated its already weak financial situation. Another difficulty faced by the NSBO was that, unlike its Communist and socialist rivals, it had to attempt to rationalise the NSDAP's pro-capitalist right-wing out of existence, a feat which it was unable to achieve. The contradictions within the party programme were driven home to unionised labour by the trade union and left-wing press at every opportunity. Finally, and most fundamental in importance, the nature of the organisation proved a great handicap. It was never designed to be a union in the traditional sense, as is clear from a statement of the R.B.A.: 'The NSBO is not a true economic organisation; it is not a National Socialist

96) E.g. the SPD's Volkswacht (Herford), 24 June 1932.

97) Report by Police President, Bochum, 2 February 1932: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

98) "R.B.A. Rundschreiben Nr. 6", Berlin, 24 August 1931: HA 15/283.

"R.B.A. Rundschreiben Nr. 8", Berlin, 21 November 1931: *ibid.*

99) "R.B.A. Rundschreiben Nr. 11", Berlin, 20 June 1932: *ibid.*

trade union. Its first and primary task is to win political power.' 100)

Despite the fact that ultimately the NSBO did involve itself in economic matters (in 1932 it took part in a number of strikes), it continued to suffer from its ambiguous nature. In 1931 the adverse effect of the political, rather than the economic, function it performed was realised only too clearly by the R.B.A.: 'The NSBO has always emphasized that it is not an economic association or a "National Socialist trade union", but a purely political fighting organisation of the party in the factories. But the undeniably materialistic attitude of the worker makes him want to "see" something, that is he wants to have material advantages in the form of trade union financial support (in event of strikes) after he has joined the NSBO. Since this cannot be guaranteed to him he remains outside the organisation.' 101)

It would be a mistake to conclude from the poor performance of the Westphalian NSBO that the Nazi appeal to labour in general failed to elicit any significant response. Both Gau organisations projected a working class image and took great care not to offend the sensibilities of the workers in the party. Wagner, for example, made sure that branch leaders in the industrial towns were drawn from the ranks of the working class and he occasionally removed branch leaders whom he considered too 'bourgeois' (bürgerlich). 102) Meyer too was aware of the need of the party to retain a working class profile. One can see his concern on this point in his reaction to the removal of a miner, SA-leader Stangier, from the list of parliamentary candidates for the electoral district Westphalia-North by the Personalamt in 1932. Meyer was appalled by the Munich decision. Writing to the Personalamt on the matter, he stated that the decision would have to be reversed, for otherwise 'it would do great damage to the cause'. Three major reasons were put forward by Meyer to justify his

100) "R.B.A. Rundschreiben Nr. 5", Berlin, 8 August 1931: HA 15/283.

101) "R.B.A. Lagebericht Nr. 4", (16.5.-30.6.1931): BAK NS I/258.

102) E.g. the case of Theiler, OGL of Hagen, removed by Wagner for this 'offence' - see Wagner to RL Abteilung 1, Bochum, 16 May 1931: BAK NS 22/1076.

demand. Firstly, he pointed out that his Gau contained hundreds of thousands of miners and industrial workers. In view of this fact alone the candidature of a worker was an absolute necessity. Secondly, Meyer reminded the Personalamt that 'in my Gau the bulk of the party membership is drawn from ranks of workers of the fist (Arbeiter der Faust).' The great majority of party members, in his opinion, would not be able to understand why a 'worker of the fist' was not placed high on the party list. Finally, Meyer argued that Stangier's candidature 'would be proof to the population of the Gau that we take our socialism seriously and that the party was not averse to furthering a worker'. 103)

The effort made to attract working class support was reflected in the propaganda put out by the Westphalian Nazis in the early nineteen-thirties, the language and form of which was often impossible to differentiate from that used by the KPD. The 'left-wing slant' of the party's propaganda, which became especially pronounced in the course of 1932, was strongly criticised by pro-Nazi industrialists in the Ruhr region. The major complaint was about 'its pure marxist character', with its emphasis on socialisation, support for socialist wage theories, and the view that in industry the terms 'employer and exploiter were synonymous'. What concerned the industrialists particularly was the Nazis' attempts to set 'one social group against another'. The incitement to class-hatred was strongly condemned, as was the 'personal defamation' of local industrialists in Nazi pamphlets, which echoed Communist publications in every respect. 104)

A news-sheet produced by the NSBO in Wanne-Eickel, the Betriebsarbeiter und Hakenkreuz (a fortnightly publication), is illustrative of the type of anti-capitalist attack used by the Nazis to attract working class support. In an article, which appeared in November 1931, the Nazis took strong objection

103) GL Meyer to Loeper, Personalamt, Gelsenkirchen, 20 February 1932: NS 22/1075.

104) The views of pro-Nazi industrialists of the Ruhr were passed on to Munich headquarters - see the letter by A. Heinrichsbauer to G. Strasser, Essen, 20 September 1932: NA 7/1/11441.

to the announcement of redundancies and the proposed wage cuts in the mining industry. The measures were interpreted as 'exposing the ugly face of capital' and were condemned as an insult to 'national and socialist thinking Germany'. They indicated the defects of a political and economic system which allowed private economic interests to determine arbitrarily the fate of hundreds of thousands of working people. 'These plans', the article went on 'mean that a whole industrial province will be subjected to hunger to further the interests of the big industrialists and their finance-capitalist backers.' Needless to say, the NSDAP and NSBO strongly opposed the measures. The article went on to assure the reader that in a Nazi Germany under 'the leadership of the worker (sic) Adolf Hitler' such action would not be tolerated, for Nazi economic thinking held that 'the economy is not to be used for profiteering, but for sustaining the German Volk'. The article ended with the slogan 'The common interest before self-interest', as enshrined in point 24 of the NSDAP's programme. 105)

The response of the working class to Nazi overtures in Westphalia cannot be measured simply by the performance of the NSBO, which shows primarily the failure of the party to appeal successfully to unionised labour. By the early nineteen-thirties a sizeable section of the working population was unemployed, and there was exceptionally high unemployment in towns such as Bochum, Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen, Hagen, Herne and Schwelm. 106) It was the unemployed worker, especially the younger one, who was particularly prone to listen to the appeal of radicalism, and both the KPD and the NSDAP benefited from their distress. Within the NSDAP large numbers of the unemployed were to be found in the SA,

105) Extracts taken from Betriebsarbeiter und Hakenkreuz, 21 November 1931 - copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

106) Bennecke, op. cit., p.163; cf. the report "Zur wirtschaftlichen Lage", Bochum, 25 January 1932 in WWA K2/689; also the numerous statistics contained in the reports by the president of the Landesarbeitsamt Westfalen, in WWA K2/410.

in which young unemployed workers predominated. 107)

One statistical source which can be used to provide an accurate assessment of the extent of working class support acquired by the Westphalian NSDAP relates to the social composition of its membership. As is shown elsewhere in this study, the Westphalian NSDAP by 1930 already had a not inconsiderable number of working class members. 108) Between September 1930 and January 1933 the percentage of the "worker" category rose from 32.4 to 37.6 per cent in the case of Gau Westphalia-North, and from 35.3 to 43.8 per cent in the case of Gau Westphalia-South. 109) If one adds the category of "Angestellte", which accounted for 21.1 per cent of the membership in Gau Westphalia-North and 24.1 per cent in Gau Westphalia-South, then the percentages of the members which can be classified as workers in the broad sense of the word increase to 58.7 and 67.9 per cent respectively. 110) These figures are considerably higher than those for the NSDAP as a whole and indicate that in Westphalia, especially in Gau Westphalia-South, the NSDAP was not a predominantly Mittelstand party.

Another indication of the amount of working class support enjoyed by the Nazis in Westphalia is provided by an analysis of the NSDAP's electoral returns. In comparison with the vote secured in the Reichstag election of May 1928, the NSDAP increased its support by 741,000 votes in the July election of 1932. 111) This huge increase came from two main sources: firstly, from an increase of 492,000 in the total vote; secondly, from the 338,000 votes lost by the various bourgeois parties. One may assume that the bulk of the votes lost by the bourgeois parties went to the Nazis, though the Centre Party, which acquired a further 106,000 in this period, probably took a share. Of the 492,000 new

107) Carsten, Fascism ..., op. cit., pp.139-140. Cf. Bennecke's statistics relating to the NSDAP and the SA in Gau Sachsen in 1931 show that 44 per cent of the SA were unemployed; in some branches and SA Stürme the figure was as high as 80 to 90 per cent - Bennecke, op. cit., pp.56-57.

108) See chapter 8, pp.297 ff..

109) Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.148. For the NSDAP as a whole the January 1933 percentage was 32.5 - Schäfer, op. cit., p.19.

110) "Angestellte" accounted for 20.6 per cent of the party's national membership by 1933 - Schäfer, op. cit., p.19.

111) This figure, and those which follow, are calculated from those given in Dittmann, op. cit.,. The figures are to the nearest thousand.

votes, the Nazis gained approximately two-thirds. This calculation allows for the increase in the vote of the Centre Party, as well as the gains recorded by the KPD. ¹¹²⁾ Given the social composition of the Westphalian population, the major element among the new voter category must have been working class. It follows therefore that the NSDAP acquired a considerable number of working class votes.

This view is reinforced by the progress made by the NSDAP in the many electoral areas of Westphalia which had an overwhelming working class population, especially those in the Ruhr region. In the Reichstag election of July 1932 the NSDAP secured a relative majority in a number of constituencies in which either the SPD or the KPD had been the premier party in the earlier elections, namely Altena, Bochum, Ennepe-Ruhrkreis, Hagen, Iserlohn, Lüdenscheld and Unna. ¹¹³⁾ Although a more equal division of the votes of the two left-wing parties allowed the NSDAP to secure relative majorities in these areas, the good Nazi performance can only be explained by a strong working class support.

The Elections of 1932.

The year 1932 was to prove a taxing one, both for the voter and for the political parties. Within the space of nine months there were two presidential elections (in March and April), two Reichstag elections (in July and November), and the Prussian Landtag election (also in April). The elections were to test the financial and physical resources of the parties and to lead to a gradual exhaustion of the voter.

i) The Presidential Elections of March and April 1932.

Since the Reichstag election of 1930 the Nazis had not been able to demonstrate the extent of their support on a national level, as is indicated in a

¹¹²⁾ The KPD gained 299,000 votes between 1928 and 1932, mainly at the expense of the SPD, which lost 183,000 voters in this period.

¹¹³⁾ Milatz, op. cit., appendix - maps of the 1930 and 1932 Reichstag elections.

number of Landtag elections held in 1931. ¹¹⁴⁾ Throughout 1931 the activism of the party had been impressive. In Gau Westphalia-North alone between March and November 1931 the NSDAP had held 909 public meetings. ¹¹⁵⁾ This excludes all the membership meetings, 'German Evenings' and 'German Days', SA demonstrations and propaganda marches which were also a staple element in Nazi propaganda, of which there were about 1,000. ¹¹⁶⁾

By 1932 the party machine was thus well tuned to engage in the efficiency test represented by the presidential election, which took place in March. In this election the broad strategy of the NSDAP campaign was orchestrated by Goebbels, who set the propaganda machine in motion in February 1932, before Hitler's candidature had been announced. Goebbels' attack was aimed at the destruction of the 'system in force since 1918', and this became the dominant theme of the Nazi propaganda effort. 'End it now' was the punch line 'to be hammered home'. ¹¹⁷⁾ Following the announcement of Hitler's candidature the ambitions of the party reached new heights: a Hitler victory. This ambitious objective placed great strains on the party for failure to reach it, as Goebbels himself stated in a circular to the Gau propaganda leaders, 'would deal the party a heavy blow'. ¹¹⁸⁾

The Nazis were placed in a difficult position in the Westphalian region. They faced not only the strong Centre Party/SPD 'alliance' backing Hindenburg, but also a formidable Communist campaign for Thälmann. The Centre Party was particularly active on Hindenburg's behalf. Its extensive campaign was supported by the appearance of Brüning in Dortmund on 9 March. His emotional appeal, calling for Hindenburg's re-election, was widely publicised in the regional Catholic press. ¹¹⁹⁾ The SPD projected Hindenburg as the only 'guardian

114) Impressive results were secured above all in Oldenburg (37.2 per cent) and Hesse (37 per cent).

115) Schröder, op. cit., pp.309 ff..

116) In October 1931 Gau Westphalia-North had held 112 public meetings and an additional 120 other functions: Schröder, op. cit., p.56.

117) "Sonderrundschreiben an alle Gaue und Gaupropagandaleitungen", Berlin, 20 February 1932: HA 15/287.

118) "Rundschreiben der RPL", Berlin, 20 February 1932: HA 15/287.

119) E.g. Tremonia, 10 March 1932.

of the Constitution' and condemned the ambitions and objectives of both Thälmann and Hitler. ¹²⁰⁾ The SPD was embarrassed by the position it found itself in and both the Communists and Nazis ridiculed its support for Hindenburg. The Nazis distributed the SPD's anti-Hindenburg pamphlets of 1925, among 'marxist' circles during the last days of the campaign. ¹²¹⁾

The result of the March poll was a great disappointment to the NSDAP. Although Hindenburg's re-election was prevented (by a mere 0.4 per cent), the national vote for Hitler (30.1 per cent) placed him in a hopeless position in the necessary second poll in April. In Westphalia the NSDAP fared relatively badly, though in relation to the 1930 Reichstag election it increased its poll by some 50 per cent. Hindenburg secured an absolute majority in both Westphalian electoral districts:

	Hindenburg	Duesterberg	Hitler	Thälmann	
W-N	60.4	5.2	22.1	12.1	
W-S	52.7	4.3	24.2	18.7	
Reich	49.6	6.8	30.1	13.2	122)

In the second presidential election the NSDAP faced formidable obstacles if the ambition to secure a Hitler victory was to be realised. The hope for victory in the first run had been rudely shattered. The failure led to widespread disappointment within the party. ¹²³⁾ The degree of optimism current in the party before the election can be measured by the fact that in Westphalia the SA was prepared on the eve of the poll for an anticipated Nazi seizure of power. ¹²⁴⁾ After the election the Nazis were put in an awkward situation. It was clear that Hitler had little chance of success. This fact could not be admitted, however, and the campaign had to be conducted in the belief that victory was possible. New instructions to the Gaue from Goebbels' Reichswahl-

120) See especially the issues of the Westfälische Allgemeine Volks-Zeitung from 3 March 1932 onwards.

121) "Rundschreiben der RPL", Berlin, 5 March 1932: HA 15/287.

122) Figures taken from Milatz, 'Das Ende der Parteien im Spiegel der Wahlen 1930-1933', in Das Ende der Parteien, op. cit., p.762.

123) Cf. Horn, op. cit., p.348.

124) "Anordnung für die SA Untergruppe W-N", Gelsenkirchen, 8 March 1932: copy in SAD MI IP/611.

leitung outlined the tactics to be adopted to secure victory. ¹²⁵⁾ Although Goebbels acknowledged that, in view 'of the short time available', the party had little hope of penetrating the Centre Party and SPD vote, his hopes were pinned on attracting the bourgeois vote which had backed Hindenburg in the first run. His instructions were framed with this in mind. Every Gau was to determine 'which baker, butcher, shopkeeper, publican etc., had voted for Hindenburg and why'. Once the Hindenburg voter was identified, personal efforts were to be made to win him over. Greater care was also to be given to the distribution of propaganda material, for, as Goebbels pointed out, 'it is pointless to press a pamphlet designed for the peasantry into the hands of the worker and vice versa'. The female voters were to be cultivated more assiduously and to be 'enlightened' concerning the NSDAP's attitude towards women. Old Age Pensioners too were singled out for special attention. Finally Goebbels demanded a more effective use of the Nazi press, especially during the Easter period during which three times the normal edition was to be printed to compensate for the government's ban on electioneering during the holidays.

In Westphalia preparations for the second presidential election were set in motion almost immediately after the first result had been announced. In Gau Westphalia-South a number of 'instructions' were sent to the branches, which were called upon to secure an extra 100,000 votes for Hitler:

1. Every party member must fulfil his duty and try to win over two to three Hindenburg voters in the coming weeks.
2. House to house canvassing must be furthered with all the means available.
3. Our meetings must be organised in such a fashion that Hindenburg voters are attracted to them.
4. Our NSF members must do all in their power to influence other women.
5. Branches are to hold special meetings for the unemployed. No entrance charge is to be made.
6. Agitation in the rural areas is to be stepped up.' 126)

These guidelines anticipated those laid down by the Reichswahlleitung on 23

125) For the following see "An alle Gaue", Reichswahlleitung der NSDAP, Berlin, 23 March 1932: HA 15/288.

126) "Rundschreiben Nr. 3", Bochum, 14 March 1932: copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd.3.

March, which were also passed on to the branches for implementation. 127)

The instructions, by standardizing the methods (and propaganda content to some degree) to be employed by the party, robbed the localities of the freedom they had previously enjoyed in the conduct of their campaigns. On the need for uniformity in the campaign further Gau instructions, issued during the election period, were adamant. 128) Style, format and content of the Nazi message were rigidly prescribed. The theme of all meetings was to be 'Away with the Hindenburg-Front - With Adolf Hitler we will secure German Freedom'. Each speech was initially to deal with the diversity of the 'Hindenburg election-community' and the 'chief characteristics' of those parties backing his candidature. The SPD was to be blamed with 'marxism, nationalisation, treason, atheism, pacifism', and vilified as 'a guarantor of Versailles and an enemy of the Churches'. The Centre Party was accused of 'misuse of religion, the pulpit and the confessional', as well as being an enemy of our Wehrmacht and walking arm in arm with atheists'. The Staatspartei (the former DDP) was to be summarily dismissed as being little more than a 'representative of Jewish money sacks'. After this broadside each speech had to emphasize the stature of Hitler and the positive nature of the party programme. Those points on which the NSDAP had been attacked in the earlier campaign were to be dealt with vigorously. Thus the speakers were instructed to project the NSDAP's favourable attitude towards the Churches, the anti-inflation policies the party would pursue if Hitler were elected, and the Volksgemeinschaft for which it stood. Some further points were to be dealt with briefly, namely the position of women, the sanctity of property, the rights of the worker to social security and union representation. In conclusion, a few major points of Nazi foreign policy were to be underlined: the NSDAP's opposition to reparations, Versailles and the Young Plan.

127) "Rundschreiben Nr. 4", Bochum, 24 March 1932: copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

128) For the following see "Anordnung für den 2 Wahlgang und die kommende Preussenwahl", GL Wagner, Bochum, n.d.: copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

This mixture in the format outlined above was transmitted by the Nazi speakers to all corners of Westphalia. 129) The Nazis were even more active than usual and 'no other party could keep pace with the NSDAP's election propaganda'. 130) The financial and physical strain of the campaign soon began to tell and signs of discontent rapidly appeared within the party. These were dealt with energetically by the Gauleiter, who threatened recalcitrant branch leaders with dismissal. Wagner, as usual, was to the fore. He obviously anticipated trouble for his Rundschreiben of 24 March ended with the warning that 'those district and branch leaders who feel that they either cannot or will not follow my orders should do the decent thing and resign so that I, as Gauleiter, will not be troubled by removing them from their posts'. 131) Despite this threat Wagner was faced with a howl of protests, as is indicated by his subsequent instructions: 'Branches are protesting that they are not in the position to pursue the election campaign. For a National Socialist nothing is impossible. The branch leaders and their assistants can only call themselves leaders if they prove that they can find the way and means to surmount difficulties. As Gauleiter I expect that no responsible individual in Westphalia-South will use the expression: "That is impossible".' 132)

The second presidential election in Westphalia saw an increase in support for both Hindenburg and Hitler, while the third candidate, Thälmann, slipped further behind:

	Hindenburg	Hitler	Thälmann	
W-N	63.9	27.2	8.9	
W-S	57.7	29.0	13.3	
Reich	53.0	36.8	10.2	133)

The Hindenburg combination, primarily Catholic and SPD voters, proved too

129) Cf. the report on a Nazi meeting in the small village of Hamberge - the content of the speech followed the format laid down by the Gauleitung verbatim; report by Bürgermeister des Amtes Hausberge, 11 April 1932: SAD MI IP/610 Bd. 7.

130) Report by Police President, Bochum, 13 May 1932: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

131) "Rundschreiben Nr. 4", Bochum, 24 March 1932: copy in SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

132) "Rundschreiben Nr. 5", Bochum, 1 April 1932: *ibid.*

133) Milatz, in Das Ende der Parteien, op. cit., p.762.

formidable and the Nazis' gigantic propaganda effort failed to make an impression on it. The disappearance of the DNVP candidate probably benefited both Hitler and Hindenburg. Hitler may also have picked up a few Communist votes. In 45 of the 53 urban and rural districts of Westphalia Hindenburg secured 50 per cent or more of the vote. In the 18 predominantly Catholic districts he gained over 70 per cent of the poll. ¹³⁴⁾ The Nazis could point to only a few successes. Only 3 rural counties gave Hitler an absolute majority, those of Wittgenstein, Halle and Lübbecke. The latter provided by far the best result: 61.3 per cent. ¹³⁵⁾

The proximity of the Prussian Landtag election, held on 24 April, forced the parties to continue their campaigns, but in the traditional style of all against all. The NSDAP campaign was partially handicapped by the ban on the SA and SS on 13 April. This closed the numerous SA-Homes, which were often of vital importance to the smaller branches, and which were used for the production of propaganda material and for the 'political instruction' of Nazi supporters and speakers. In several instances their loss was sorely felt. ¹³⁶⁾ The NSDAP's Landtag returns were similar to those secured by the party in the presidential election. In Westphalia-South it gained 28.9 per cent of the vote (Prussia as a whole gave the party 36.3 per cent), which placed it ahead of the second strongest party, the Centre, which polled 24.3 per cent. In Westphalia-North the situation was reversed, the Centre Party retaining its traditional dominance with 35.2 per cent, well ahead of the NSDAP's 24.3 per cent. ¹³⁷⁾

ii) The Reichstag Election of 31 July 1932.

Five weeks after the Prussian Landtag election the political situation

¹³⁴⁾ Milatz, op. cit., appendix - amp of the second presidential election results of 10 April 1932.

¹³⁵⁾ Schröder, op. cit., p.53.

¹³⁶⁾ E.g. the complaint by the OGL of Hörter to the town authorities, Hörter, 4 May 1932; also application by the Herford branch for permission to use the closed SA-home for a Rednerschule: SAD MI IP/610 Bd. 7.

¹³⁷⁾ Percentages calculated from figures given in the Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 27 April 1932.

in the Weimar Republic became more fluid as a consequence of the fall of Brüning. ¹³⁸⁾ The new government was headed by the comparatively unknown Franz von Papen, a representative of the anti-republican, monarchical establishment. Unlike Brüning, who had attempted to construct a dam against Nazi radicalism, von Papen pursued a more flexible policy towards the Nazis. He hoped, at the very least, to secure their toleration. The dissolution of the Reichstag on 4 June (for which the Nazis had been agitating in the first half of the year) and the lifting of the SA/SS ban in mid-June were designed to bring about Nazi cooperation. The destruction of republican Prussia on 20 July was another development favourably viewed by the NSDAP leadership.

For the Westphalian NSDAP the neutral stance adopted towards von Papen by the party on the national level was a very real handicap in the election campaign which followed the dissolution of the Reichstag. The regional left-wing press, which equated the Papen government with the 'system of the Nazis' undermined the effectiveness of the NSDAP's campaign. ¹³⁹⁾ The harm done by these attacks was noted by Gauleiter Wagner in an analysis of the regional election campaign sent to Strasser in August 1932: 'Our whole propaganda in this campaign has suffered because of its lack of clarity, cohesion and the absence of our old revolutionary élan. The neutral stance vis-à-vis the Papen Cabinet ... gave our opponents the chance to pursue a primitive, but psychologically astute and effective propaganda against us.' ¹⁴⁰⁾ The proclamation of new emergency decrees on 14 June, which reduced social welfare payments to a pittance, was especially damaging to the Nazi cause. It allowed the Left to denounce the Nazis as 'Supporters of the Emergency Decrees' and 'Protectors of the Rich and Exploiters of the Poor'. The Nazi attempt to refute the idea

138) For the background of this event see W. Conze, 'Die politischen Entscheidungen in Deutschland 1929-1933', in Die Staats- und Wirtschaftskrise des deutschen Reiches 1929/33, op. cit., pp.236 ff.; also Bracher, Auflösung ..., op. cit., pp.511 ff..

139) Westfälische Allgemeine Volks-Zeitung, especially the issues of 7 June, 14 June and 28 July 1932.

140) Wagner to Strasser, Bochum, 4 August 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

that 'they tolerated Papen' came too late to counter left-wing propaganda. ¹⁴¹⁾ The identification of the NSDAP with the Papen government (reflected in a common term of abuse: Papenkreuzler) affected the Westphalian movement particularly since the 'active struggle of our movement', as Wagner phrased it, 'is led almost completely by young workers, students and such people most dramatically hit by these measures'. ¹⁴²⁾

The defensive posture the party was forced to adopt in the campaign was a new experience for the movement. An additional problem, albeit shared by other parties, was the increasing weariness of the voter. For the NSDAP, dependent on new voters and recent converts to the party, the need to stimulate and interest the populace in its activities was important if the party was to continue its expansion. The Parteilitung advised more variety in the party's propaganda as a means of overcoming election fatigue. ¹⁴³⁾ Instructions to the Gau propaganda departments emphasized above all the effectiveness of 'new technical equipment' to further interest - the better use of microphones, loudspeakers, sound films and gramophone records of speeches by Hitler, Goebbels and other well-known party leaders. The central directives led to a switch in the Westphalian movement's electioneering tactics. Greater emphasis fell on canvassing, in which the SA and SS were particularly prominent, and less was placed on the traditional method of holding election meetings and mass rallies. ¹⁴⁴⁾ In the Ruhr region the Nazis encountered much greater left-wing opposition. Although the Communists continued to concentrate their major effort on the 'social fascism' of the SPD, both left-wing parties at grassroots level were prepared to cooperate in meeting Nazi violence with violence. The result of this more aggressive attitude was that the Nazis were unable 'in many areas to pursue a reasonable propaganda, either in the

141) "An alle Gaue, Propaganda- und Pressestellen der Partei", RPL Munich, 23 July 1932: HA 15/289.

142) Wagner to Strasser, Bochum, 4 August 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

143) "Denkschrift der RPL zur Reichstagswahl 1932": HA 15/289.

144) "Änderung in der Werbearbeit der NSDAP", police report, Bochum, 14 June 1932: SAM VII - 67 Bd. 3.

form of meetings, discussion evenings (Sprechabende) or distribution of pamphlets'. ¹⁴⁵⁾ Moreover the SPD especially cramped the style of the NSDAP by utilising some of its techniques, thus providing a far more sophisticated and effective opposition. ¹⁴⁶⁾

For the NSDAP the result of the election in Westphalia was not very encouraging. In both Gaue the NSDAP vote was lower than that which it had secured in the second presidential election. In the case of Gau Westphalia-South the party also lost votes in comparison with those secured in the Landtag election of April:

	<u>Reichstag</u> (July)	<u>Landtag</u> (April)	2nd Presidential (April)
W-N	25.7	24.3	27.2
W-S	27.2	28.9	29.0
Reich	37.3		

147)

Compared to the NSDAP's national performance the Westphalian Gau again secured two of the worst returns. The best results were achieved in those areas where the NSDAP had broken through in 1930: the Protestant rural counties of north-eastern and southern Westphalia, in which the Nazis consolidated their position:

Wittgenstein	63.8	
Lübbecke	60.7	
Siegen	52.0	
Halle	50.0	
Herford	41.8	
Minden	41.1	148)

Encouraging for the Nazis was their significant success in certain industrialised urban and county areas, especially in the Ruhr area of Gau Westphalia-South. In a number of these the NSDAP became the premier party:

Altena	39.6
Iserlohn	35.6
Ennepe-Ruhr	33.9

145) Wagner to Strasser, 4 August 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

146) See the analysis of the SPD's campaign in Dortmund in Klotzbach, op. cit., pp.63-65.

147) Percentages for the July election taken from Milatz, op. cit., p.112.

148) Calculated from statistics given in ed. Statistisches Reichsamt, Haupt-ergebnisse der Wahlen zum Reichstag 31 Juli 1932, Berlin, 1932, pp.23-24. (The percentages which follow in this paragraph are also taken from this source.)

Hagen	32.1
Unna	31.0
Lüdenscheid	29.5
Bochum	29.4

In the Reichstag election of 1930 the SPD had been the leading party in Bochum, Hagen, Altena, Iserlohn, and Lüdenscheid, while the KPD had led in Ennepe-Ruhr, and the Centre Party in Unna. The Nazis also secured creditable returns in a number of other industrial centres, such as Bielefeld (31.7), Wanne-Eickel (27.5), Recklinghausen (23.8), Gelsenkirchen (22.9) and Herne (22.6). It was in the Catholic urban and rural districts that the NSDAP failed to record any significant gains. In the 18 Catholic counties the Centre Party continued to enjoy overwhelming support.

The July results marked the end of the rapid growth of Nazi support in Westphalia. But in comparison with the Reichstag election of 1930 the NSDAP had more than doubled its vote in both Westphalian electoral districts. The 1932 elections had seen the Nazis attracted support from two major sources: the votes taken from the bourgeois parties and from new voters. A comparison of the July result with the September 1930 returns reflects this clearly:

	Westphalia-North		Westphalia-South	
	Increase	Decrease	Increase	Decrease
Total vote	89,000		78,000	
NSDAP	197,000		209,000	
DNVP	2,000		15,000	
DVP		47,000		70,000
Wirtschaftspartei		50,000		50,000
Centre	47,000		39,000	
Staatspartei		23,000		30,000
SPD		8,000		22,000
KPD	34,000		67,000	
Others (CSVD, Landvolk etc.)		73,000		81,000
				149)

With the exception of the DNVP, which increased its vote marginally, the bourgeois parties were reduced to insignificance in the July election. The bulk of the losses sustained by the bourgeois parties went to the NSDAP. The party also benefited from the higher turn-out. The KPD, one may assume, acquired the votes lost by the SPD, and took a sizeable share of the higher

149) Figures taken from Dittmann, op. cit.; the figures are rounded off to the nearest thousand.

turn-out. The increase in the number of votes also provided more support for the Centre Party.

iii) The Reichstag Election of 6 November 1932.

Gauleiter Wagner drew little comfort from the July election results. At most they had shown 'the stability of the movement in four successive electoral struggles'. What concerned him in particular was the increased support secured by the Centre Party and the KPD. ¹⁵⁰⁾ At the national level the success of the NSDAP, now the strongest political force, did not bring the expected rewards of office. The doubts about which course the party should take increased in early August after the failure of Hitler to secure the chancellorship. ¹⁵¹⁾ The latter's 'all or nothing' attitude, reflected in his refusal of the vice-chancellorship offered to him by Hindenburg in an interview on 13 August, heightened the restlessness within the party. In Westphalia Hitler's action 'demoralised many party comrades, who believed that the Führer would never secure power legally. The alarmists within the party had a field-day. If the NSDAP found itself in a crisis at the time then it was this section of the party, which questioned the Führer's decisions, which was alone responsible. Many of them were weary of being led from one election to another and saw the end of the movement approaching' ¹⁵²⁾ The position of the Westphalian NSDAP was also threatened by the increasing antagonism between the party and important industrial interests which became disenchanted with the Nazi's behaviour in the summer and autumn of 1932. An insight into this trouble (some of their complaints were shared by other sections of Nazi support in the region) is provided by a report of a meeting between Nazi representatives and members of industry who were pro-Nazi, held in September 1932. 'Regretted above all was the parliamentary level to which the party had sunk', as seen

150) Wagner to Strasser, 4 August 1932: BAK NS 22/1076.

151) For the background see Bracher, Auflösung ..., op. cit., pp.615 ff..

152) Thus Schröder on the mood of the Westphalian party in the autumn of 1932 - Schröder, op. cit., p.22. See also Horn, op. cit., pp.357 ff.; on the situation in other regions see Noakes, op. cit., pp.233 ff.; Fridham, op. cit., pp.285 ff..

in 'the discussions with the Centre Party, in the extensive practical abandonment of the authoritarian ideal, and the constant joint action with the Communists on practical questions'. ¹⁵³⁾ These tendencies were rejected not only by those industrialists present at the meeting, but by Nazis in the Rhineland and Westphalia in general, 'especially by the younger party members and idealists, since the parliamentary nature of the party is in stark contrast to the views expressed, for example, in Hitler's wonderful book Mein Kampf'. Very damaging too 'was the effect of the discussions with the Centre Party, which in the Protestant-Prussian north is taken far more seriously than in the Catholic south, where such activities are regarded as being tactically necessary'. In the Ruhr 'the mere holding of the talks had undermined faith in National Socialism'. Another criticism concerned the NSDAP's attacks on the DNVP. These were disliked by the industrialists because, in their eyes, the DNVP was also 'a representative of the national idea'. Finally, the trend towards 'marxist propaganda' by the regional NSDAP, and the attacks on industrialists in general, were viewed with misgivings.

The disillusionment within the party did not augur well for yet another election campaign, set in motion by the dissolution of parliament on 12 September. Once again the parties plunged into the fray with their by now familiar slogans and ideas. The KPD pursued its 'unity front' (Einheitsfront) policy, designed to bring both socialist parties together on the local level. This was strongly opposed by the SPD, committed once more to countering the challenge of the radical Left and the radical Right. ¹⁵⁴⁾ The Centre Party concentrated primarily on von Papen and the 'Obrigkeitsstaat' tendencies of his government, in place of which the Centre advocated the idea of 'an authoritarian democracy' (sic). ¹⁵⁵⁾ The NSDAP pursued a campaign directed chiefly against the

153) For the following see A. Heinrichsbauer to G. Strasser, Essen, 20 September 1932: NA 7/1/11436-11445.

154) The Einheitsfront was the major theme pursued in the regional Communist paper Der Kämpfer (previously Westfälischer Kämpfer), issues for October. For the SPD's attitude see Westfälische Allgemeine Volks-Zeitung, 21 and 22 October 1932; the October issues also show the SPD's anti-Papen and anti-Hitler line.

155) Tremonia, 29 and 30 October 1932; also 1 November 1932.

Papen government, and attacks on 'marxism' were relegated to a secondary position. 156)

The election campaign was much more muted than those which had taken place earlier in the year. Lack of finance restricted the efforts of all the parties. The lack of interest of the voter matched the lethargy of the party propaganda machines. 157) In consequence there was a slight decline in turn-out.

In Westphalia the results of 6 November saw little change in the strength of the major parties in comparison with the July returns:

	NSDAP	DNVP	Centre	SPD	KPD	
W-N	22.3	7.1	31.9	17.0	15.8	
W-S	24.8	6.2	23.1	16.6	23.2	
Reich	33.1	8.3	11.9	20.4	16.9	158)

The slight decline of the Nazi vote was glossed over in the regional Nazi press and transformed into a healthy development. It was projected as a 'necessary cleansing process', which had removed the weaker elements from the party. Those voters who had remained true to the movement were deemed 'the political élite of the nation'. 159) A few electoral gains in some of the Westphalian counties were celebrated as 'victories', even though these involved only increases of a hundred or so votes. 160) The only real success came in the Nazi stronghold of County Wittgenstein, where the Nazis increased their share of the vote from 64.3 to 76.0 per cent. 161) Elsewhere in the province the decline in the Nazi share of the poll was spread fairly evenly.

Towards the Third Reich.

The results of the November Reichstag election heightened the frustrations

156) Rote Erde, October issues, 1932.

157) E.g. the editorial on the campaign in the Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger und Zeitung, 4 November 1932.

158) Dittmann, op. cit..

159) Rote Erde, 7 and 8 November 1932.

160) Cf. VB, 22 November 1932 - "Our electoral victory in the Centre Party strongholds of Münster and the Münsterland". The gains involved a mere 90 votes in Münster and 265 votes in county Münster.

161) VB, 18 November 1932.

and resentments which had grown in the NSDAP in the summer and autumn of 1932. The party hierarchy attempted to cover up the differences of opinion concerning the future course of the NSDAP through declarations of 'unshaken loyalty to the Führer'. 162) The gloom within the Westphalian movement was increased by the resignation of Strasser in December and the 'decline of the NSDAP's vote in the local elections in Thuringia, which gave renewed impetus to the discontent of members. 163) The party was financially at a low ebb and weary of the incessant election struggles which had brought no tangible rewards. Yet despite the many problems and difficulties facing the Nazis, the November to January period showed that the party framework was still strong. The party remained intact and held on to its membership.

Of major importance in the period of crisis was the retention of the momentum of the party, the necessity for which Goebbels realised. 164) In Westphalia the problem was largely solved by a fortuitous event which stimulated above all the organisation of Gau Westphalia-North: the Lippe Landtag election which fell in mid-January 1933. As part of Gau Westphalia-North, the tiny Land of Lippe was subjected to an intensive propaganda campaign designed to secure a victory and thus restore Nazi prestige. The rural backwater became the focus for the attention of the party's best speakers and most able propaganda specialists. 165) Hitler himself spearheaded the campaign from 4 January. A number of well-known party figures, including Goebbels, Rosenberg, Darré, Frick and Göring, addressed meetings. The result of the NSDAP's gigantic effort was a moderate increase in its vote in comparison with the November 1932 Reichstag election, from 34.7 to 39.5 per cent. Psychologically the result did much to boost the NSDAP's flagging morale. After half a year of successive electoral

162) "Declaration", signed by Frick, Göring, Röhm and Strasser, Berlin, 23 November 1932: NA 7/1/11233.

163) Schröder, op. cit., p.24.

164) Noakes, op. cit., p.241.

165) On the campaign see Schröder's description in Schröder, op. cit., pp.24-49. A more detailed account is also given by him in A. Schröder, Hitler geht auf die Dörfer. Der Auftakt zur nationalsozialistischen Revolution. Erlebnisse und Bilder von der entscheidenden Januarwahl 1933 in Lippe, Detmold, 1938.

setbacks the party could proclaim once more a victory. This was excessively celebrated, both in the regional and national Nazi press.

Just over a fortnight later Hitler became chancellor. The party fortunes were dramatically transformed. The move towards the NSDAP can be seen in the flood of membership applications in the first half of 1933. Between January and May the party membership trebled in Gau Westphalia-South and quadrupled in Gau Westphalia-North to reach totals of 82,041 and 72,157 respectively. ¹⁶⁶⁾ The strength of the NSDAP was reinforced by its success in the Reichstag and Prussian Landtag elections held on 5 March 1933. The campaign was conducted in a less free atmosphere than the earlier ones. ¹⁶⁷⁾ The greater scope given to the SA to indulge in their brand of intimidation (in Prussia the SA were used as auxiliary police by order of Göring, the new Prussian Minister of the Interior), the series of bans placed on the left-wing and Catholic press, and the attacks on the KPD after the Reichstag fire, all aided the Nazi campaign. As a government party, the NSDAP could also avail itself of the state-controlled radio, which was used extensively to carry Hitler's speeches. Important too was the removal of the financial difficulties which had hindered the party's activities in the latter half of 1932. Success at national level led to a renewed flow of funds from industrialists.

Given all the advantages enjoyed by the NSDAP, the Reichstag result of 5 March (43.9 per cent of the national vote) was disappointing. In Westphalia the NSDAP returns continued to be among the party's worst: 33.8 per cent in Westphalia-South and 34.9 per cent in Westphalia-North. Only the electoral districts of Cologne-Aachen and Berlin returned lower percentages for the Nazis. Once again the Centre Party vote remained intact. The resilience of the left-wing vote, despite the pressure exercised especially on the KPD, also limited the NSDAP's performance:

166) Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.26.

167) Cf. Klotzbach's analysis of the election campaign in Dortmund, Klotzbach, op. cit., pp.93 ff..

	NSDAP	Centre	SPD	KPD	
W-N	34.9	28.7	15.6	10.7	
W-S	33.8	22.5	16.6	16.8	
Reich	43.9	13.9	18.3	12.3	168)

The major increase of the NSDAP poll in Westphalia came from new voters and from further losses sustained by the smaller bourgeois parties. For the first time, however, the NSDAP also secured a sizeable share of former KPD voters:

		Electoral districts Westphalia-North and -South	
Increase in voters		265,000	
Losses by	KPD	115,000	
	small bour- geois parties	59,000	
Increase in votes	NSDAP	392,000	
	DNVP	17,000	
	Centre	15,000	
	SPD	22,000	169)

The gain of 392,000 votes allowed the NSDAP to expand above all in the Ruhr region, where the party secured a relative majority in all but the Lüdinghausen electoral district. 170) The Nazis were much more successful in attracting working class support from their totalitarian rival, the KPD. The Centre Party, however, retained its support and blocked Nazi progress in 19 electoral districts, with an absolute majority in 13. Unlike their co-religionists in southern Germany, the Westphalian Catholics continued to remain immune to the Nazi appeal. 171)

The lack of success of the party in the Catholic areas in particular created problems in the first years of the Third Reich. The ban imposed on new membership in May 1933 left the NSDAP with a relatively low membership in comparison with other Gaue, and both regional movements lacked suitable members to fill the many party posts within the province. 172) Gau Westphalia-North was particularly poorly placed in this respect. Numerous communities

168) Returns taken from Dittmann, op. cit..

169) Ibid..

170) Cf. Milatz, op. cit., appendix - map of the Reichstagswahl 5 March 1933.

171) Cf. Pridham, op. cit., pp.305-306.

172) Parteistatistik, op. cit., p.35 - Gau Westphalia-North and -South were placed 32nd and 29th in the list of 32 Gaue into which the party was divided in terms of the percentage of Nazi members in relation to the population of the Gau.

were without any party member at all, especially in the Catholic rural areas. Of the 44,000 party functionaries (Amtswalter) active in the Gau by 1935 only 4,000 were party members. 173)

The relative failure of the NSDAP in Westphalia is emphasized not only by these figures but by the low electoral returns secured by the party in the last phase of the Weimar Republic. The socio-religious composition of the province proved to be a major obstacle, which the NSDAP was unable to surmount in the pre-1933 period.

173) Gauschatzmeister Gau W-N to Reichsorganisationsleiter, Münster, 11 March 1935: Sammlung Schumacher 209.

Conclusion

This study of the NSDAP in Westphalia has attempted to examine the impact of National Socialism on a predominantly industrialised, urbanised region. A region with a comparable economic structure has not been examined before. The socio-economic factors at work in Westphalia presented difficulties for the Nazis. The strong tradition of working class politics was a formidable handicap throughout the Weimar period. The attachment of the large Catholic population to the Centre Party was a further disadvantage to the Nazis. Despite the NSDAP's attempt to adapt itself to local conditions, its electoral returns and membership in Westphalia lagged behind those of the national party after 1928. In the final analysis the socio-religious structure of the province proved an insuperable obstacle.

The problems facing the Westphalian Nazis had a strong effect on their activities and explain why the party's development was in some respects different from that observed in Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. One fundamental difference in the Westphalian NSDAP was its strength in the urban centres. Although after 1930 the best electoral results were secured in a number of agrarian counties, the number of votes involved was comparatively small. The majority of the NSDAP's votes came from the big cities, especially from those in the Ruhr conurbation. This feature is very noticeable in Gau Westphalia-South, where the party secured on average two-thirds of its vote in the towns situated in the 'inner' and 'outer' Ruhr.

Related to the 'urban nature' of the Westphalian NSDAP was its consistent attempts to secure the support of the working class, which brought some success. Though the regional Nazi movement mobilised considerable support from the petit-bourgeoisie, it always had a respectable number of workers in its ranks. Even in its early years, when the NSDAP was little more than a völkisch splinter group, there were a number of branches, especially in the mining communities, in which workers formed the majority of

the party membership. After the re-formation of the party in 1925 the emphasis on 'socialism' became a fundamental feature of Nazi propaganda. In part this emphasis was tactical, in part it reflected the 'socialist' convictions of the regional party leadership. Although the strength of the SPD, and later of the KPD, limited the pull exerted on the working class by the Nazis, success did not elude them entirely. In the economic crisis after 1929 the unemployed and the younger worker were attracted by the Nazi approach, which, especially in its phraseology, imitated that of the KPD. As a consequence the working class base of the regional party expanded. In southern Westphalia the percentage of workers to be found in the ranks of the NSDAP was unequalled by any other Nazi Gau. Given the relative success of the Westphalian NSDAP's attempts to attract working class support, the party's claim to be an integrative force, a Volksvereinschaft, has some validity. In the case of Hesse the sizeable industrial working class remained comparatively immune to the Nazi appeal. In Hesse, and even more so in Bavaria, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, the small town and agrarian vote (a reflection of the economic structure of these areas) largely explains the strength of Nazism.

The success of the NSDAP in attracting working class support in Westphalia was anything but complete. Given the concentration of this social group in the province, the worker was still under-represented. For the majority of the workers the SPD and KPD remained the automatic political choice. Both left-wing parties met the challenge of Nazism vigorously, though the split of the Left during the revolution of 1918-1919, and the hostility between the socialists and Communists, destroyed the unity of the working class and made a united front against Nazism impossible. The division of the working class vote allowed the Nazis to emerge as a significant political force in a number of industrial centres by the early nineteen-thirties. The combined left-wing vote continued to overshadow that secured by the NSDAP; the Nazis attracted young workers and unionised, older workers continued to support the SPD or KPD. There were no large scale desertions

by SPD or KPD voters to the NSDAP, at least not until 1933, when the KPD lost a sizeable section of its support to the Nazis.

The working class ultimately proved less resilient in the face of Nazi pressure than the Catholic population. The influence of the confessional in determining the relative failure of Nazism confirms observations made in other regional studies. Like Catholics in Hesse and Lower Saxony, those in Westphalia tended to remain faithful to the Centre Party until it disappeared in 1933. Significant Catholic support, like that enjoyed by the NSDAP in Bavaria by 1933, did not occur in central and northern Germany; here, except in the Rhineland, Catholicism faced Protestant majorities, which led Catholics to cohere better than they did in the predominantly Catholic south. In Westphalia a number of factors combined to keep 'political Catholicism' a formidable force. The experience of the Kulturkampf, bitterly fought in the province, had a long-term influence. In the revolution of 1918-1919 the hostility of the Left in the province towards religion led to a resurgence of Catholic support for the Centre Party. In the late nineteenth-twenties, and more particularly after 1930, the regional Catholic hierarchy and press reacted vigorously against the emerging NSDAP. The Nazi Weltonschauung was interpreted as a direct threat to the interests of the Catholic Church. By taking a firm stand against the atheistic tendencies of Nazism, the Catholic Church was successful in keeping the faithful from joining the NSDAP. As a consequence the Catholic voter remained virtually immune to the Nazi appeal, and in the rural and urban Catholic counties the Nazis made hardly any progress.

The situation in the predominantly Protestant rural counties was radically different. Here the confessional factor worked for, rather than against, the NSDAP. In Westphalia, as is also true of Franconia, Hesse, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, Nazism positively flourished in rural, Protestant environments in the latter years of the Weimar period. An additional factor favouring the NSDAP was the right-wing tradition among the population in the Protestant rural counties, especially the support enjoyed

by anti-Semitic movements in southern and north-eastern Westphalia. The Counties of Wittgenstein, Siegen, Halle, Lübbecke and Minden, centres of anti-Semitism in the Wilhelminian era, were to become major strongholds of Nazism. Schön, in his study of Hesse, has noted an identical development in the province of Hesse-Nassau, where the centres of the anti-Semitic Bückel movement of the pre-war period also became major Nazi growth areas.

The history of the party organisation in Westphalia shows roughly similar development to that observed elsewhere, though there are a few variations. The construction of the vertical party system based on the Gau - district - branch division was pushed through by von Pfeffer in 1925 and thus anticipated national developments. The material available on the NSDAP in the re-formation period sheds additional light on the nature of party organisation in the mid-'twenties. The relatively rigid centralisation of the party, based on the Führerprinzip, continued to be subjected to periodic challenges by lower party officials right up to the time of the 'seizure of power'. The party propaganda of the Westphalian NSDAP shows one major variation on the pattern observed elsewhere, namely the strong emphasis on 'socialism', a major theme throughout, especially in the early nineteen-thirties. In Westphalia the Nazis fought for the working class vote; the Mittelstand, under the pressure of the economic crisis after 1929, needed little encouragement to join the party.

In conclusion it must be noted once more that in the context of Westphalian politics as a whole the NSDAP never acquired the dominant position it secured in most other parts of Germany by 1933. The confessional attachment of the Catholic population to the Centre Party was not broken. The social structure of the province worked against the Nazis and the SPD and KPD remained strong barriers to Nazi expansion. In the last 'free' election of March 1933 Nazism secured little more than one-third of the total vote.

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